

# Winter Wonderland



Snow falls as people walk by a Christmas tree at Military Park in downtown Newark, N.J., Wednesday, Dec. 26, 2012. The National Weather Service said the storm is expected to dump at least four to six inches of snow on the area and also produce sleet and freezing rain.

(AP Photo/Julio Cortez)

## Powerful storm system heads Northeast

**DAN SEWELL**  
**Associated Press**

A powerful winter storm system pounded the nation's midsection Wednesday and headed toward the Northeast, where people braced for the high winds and heavy snow that disrupted holiday travel, knocked out power to thousands of homes and were blamed in at least six deaths. Hundreds of flights were canceled or delayed,

scores of motorists got stuck on icy roads or slid into drifts, and blizzard warnings were issued amid snowy gusts of 30 mph that blanketed roads and windshields, at times causing whiteout conditions. "The way I've been describing it is as a low-end blizzard, but that's sort of like saying a small Tyrannosaurus rex," said John Kwiatkowski, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Indianapolis.

The system, which spawned Gulf Coast region tornadoes on Christmas Day and a historic amount of snow in Arkansas, pushed through the Upper Ohio Valley and headed toward the Northeast. Forecasts called for 12 to 18 inches of snow inland from western New York to Maine starting late Wednesday and into Thursday and tapering off into a mix of rain and snow closer to the coast, where little accumulation was expected

in such cities as New York and Boston. The storm left freezing temperatures in its aftermath, and forecasters also said parts of the Southeast from Virginia to Florida would see severe thunderstorms. Schools on break and workers taking holiday vacations meant that many people could avoid messy commutes, but those who had to travel were implored to avoid it. Snow was blamed for scores of vehicle accidents as far east

as Maryland, and about two dozen counties in Indiana and Ohio issued snow emergency travel alerts, urging people to go out on the roads only if necessary. Some 40 vehicles got bogged down trying to make it up a slick hill in central Indiana, and four state snowplows slid off roads as snow fell at the rate of 3 inches an hour in some places.

**Continued on Page 3**



## AROUND THE WORLD

### Chavez delegating some duties to VP

**CARACAS, Venezuela (AP)** — Hugo Chavez has delegated some administrative responsibilities to Venezuela's vice president, allowing his close confidant to make decisions related to the budget, expropriations and government debt. Chavez passed on the duties to Vice President Nicolas Maduro on Dec. 8, three days before the socialist leader underwent cancer-related surgery in Cuba. The measure took effect Wednesday upon its publication in the Official Gazette. The president has been silent since the operation, raising doubts among Venezuelans regarding his health. Maduro announced on Christmas Eve that Chavez was walking and talking. □

### UN envoy to Syria returning to Russia

**MOSCOW (AP)** — The international envoy on Syria will revisit Moscow this weekend for talks on the crisis, a senior Russian diplomat said Wednesday. Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov said that U.N.-Arab League envoy Lakhdar Brahimi will arrive in Moscow on one-day visit Saturday. Brahimi met Monday in Damascus with Syrian President Bashar Assad, but didn't signal any progress toward a negotiated solution for the civil war. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said last week that Moscow would welcome any country's offer of a safe haven to Assad, but has no intention of giving him shelter if he steps down. □

### Andrew Jones jailed in battery charge

**ATLANTA** - Police say the wife of former Atlanta Braves star Andrew Jones accused him of dragging her down a staircase, grabbing her neck and saying he wanted to kill her. A police report obtained by The Associated Press says the fight happened around 1:30 a.m. on Christmas Day, after Nicole Jones asked her husband to help her prepare for Christmas. Andrew Jones was free on bond after being arrested in Duluth on a battery charge, according to Gwinnett County Jail records. Nicole Jones told officers she tried to escape upstairs, but her husband grabbed her by the ankle and dragged her downstairs, got on top of her and said, "I want to kill you," according to the report. □

### Watchdog plans probe of BBC payoff

**LONDON (AP)** — Britain's public spending watchdog says it will investigate severance packages at the BBC in the wake of a highly-criticized payout to the broadcaster's former director general. The probe comes after a group of British lawmakers accused the BBC of being cavalier with taxpayers' money by paying 450,000 pounds (\$730,000) in severance to George Entwistle — double the amount he was entitled to — when he quit last month over the BBC's disastrous handling of fallout from the Jimmy Savile sex abuse scandal. NAO's Barry Lester said Wednesday the watchdog had written to the BBC saying it wanted to look at Entwistle's payout. □

### 9 dead in Mexico town in cartel clash

**CULIACAN, Mexico (AP)** — Officials say armed men stormed a town in the mountains of the western state of Sinaloa on Christmas Eve and shot nine men to death with assault weapons, then dumped their bodies on a sports field. Officials called the assault part of a war between Mexico's two most powerful cartels. Sinaloa state prosecutor Marco Antonio Higuera Gomez said Wednesday the town of El Platanar de Los Ontiveros had become the subject of a dispute between the Sinaloa cartel controlled by Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman and remnants of the Beltran-Leyva cartel. Higuera said "everything is linked to a dispute for territory and the buying and selling of drugs." □

## Syrian General defects in public broadcast

RICK GLADSTONE

© 2012 New York Times

Syria's embattled leadership suffered a new setback Wednesday with the publicly broadcast defection of its military police chief, the highest-ranking officer to abandon President Bashar Assad since the uprising against him began nearly two years ago. The defector, Maj. Gen. Abdul-Aziz Jassem al-Shallal, announced his move in a video broadcast by Al Arabiya, saying that he had taken the step because of what he called the Syrian military's deviation from "its fundamental mission to protect the nation and transformation into gangs of killing and destruction." Al Arabiya, a Saudi-owned

Free Syrian Army, the main insurgent force fighting Assad.

Reading from a prepared statement while sitting at a desk, dressed in a camouflage uniform with red epaulets, the general did not specify in his message when he had decided to defect but said that he had been "waiting for the right circumstances to do so." He also said "there are other high-ranking officers who want to defect, but the situation is not suitable for them to declare defection."

While the general's defection was broadly embraced by opposition figures as a major blow to the government, the general, a Sunni Muslim, was not

Al-Shallal's statement came as Syrian insurgents were claiming new territorial gains against Assad in the northern and central parts of the country and as a special envoy from the United Nations and the Arab League was visiting Damascus as part of an effort to reach a political settlement that would halt the conflict, the most violent of the Arab Spring revolutions that began in the winter of 2010-2011. More than 40,000 people have been killed since protests against Assad began in March 2011.

There has been speculation that the special envoy, Lakhdar Brahimi, presented Assad with proposals for relinquishing his authority and



In this image made from video broadcast on Al Arabiya TV late Tuesday, Dec. 25, 2012, Syrian Maj. Gen. Abdul-Aziz Jassem al-Shallal makes remarks saying he is joining "the people's revolution." The general who heads Syria's military police has defected and joined the uprising against President Bashar Assad's regime, one of the highest walkouts by a serving security chief during the country's 21-month uprising, a pan Arab TV station has reported. (AP Photo/Al Arabiya via AP video)

pan-Arab broadcaster critical of the Syrian government, first broadcast the video late Tuesday, and opposition figures confirmed its authenticity Wednesday, saying the general was somewhere in Turkey. They said that al-Shallal's defection had been arranged weeks ago through tribal elders in Syria, and that the effort to smuggle him across the border, over several days, included a four-hour motorcycle ride.

Turkey has been the main destination point for Syrian military defectors, and many of them have regrouped there to join the

believed to be a member of the president's inner circle of advisers. Over the course of the conflict, despite welcoming thousands of defectors, the opposition has failed to attract figures seen as critical pillars of the government or any members of the ruling Alawite minority of Assad, the sect regarded as the backbone of the military. Nonetheless the general's denunciation of the Syrian military was at the least a new embarrassment to Assad, further undermining his repeated claims that the uprising against him is basically the work of terrorists and their foreign collaborators.

possibly leaving the country. Assad, whose Alawite minority has ruled Syria for more than four decades, has consistently said he will not leave the country, even as his control over it seems to be slipping further away. Dozens of lower-ranking Syrian military officers and hundreds of soldiers have fled Syria over the past two years. Al-Shallal, the head of the military police division of the Syrian army, is the highest-ranking military defector so far. He outranked Brig. Gen. Manaf Tlass, a boyhood friend of Assad's, who fled in July. Tlass is now believed to be living in France. □



Salvatore Ferragamo

NEW LOCATION

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# Powerful storm system heads Northeast

Continued from front

Two passengers in a car on a sleet-slickened Arkansas highway were killed Wednesday in a head-on collision, and two people, including a 76-year-old Milwaukee woman, were killed Tuesday on Oklahoma highways. Deaths from wind-toppled trees were reported in Texas and Louisiana.

The day after a holiday wasn't expected to be particularly busy for AAA, but its Cincinnati-area branch had its busiest Wednesday of the year. By mid-afternoon, nearly 400 members had been helped with tows, jump starts and other aid, with calls still coming in, spokesman Mike Mills said. Jennifer Miller, 58, was taking a bus Wednesday from Cincinnati to visit family in Columbus.

"I wish this had come yesterday and was gone today," she said, struggling with a rolling suitcase and three smaller bags on a slushy sidewalk near the station. "I'm glad I don't have to drive in this."

Traffic crawled at 25 mph on Interstate 81 in Maryland, where authorities reported scores of accidents. "We're going to try to go



**A person pushes a kart while salting the sidewalk at Military Park in downtown Newark, N.J., Wednesday, Dec. 26, 2012. The National Weather Service said the storm is expected to dump at least four to six inches of snow on the area and also produce sleet and freezing rain.**

(AP Photo/Julio Cortez)

down south and get below" the storm, said Richard Power, traveling from home in Levittown, N.Y., to Kentucky with his wife, two children and their beagle, Lucky. He said they were well on their way until they hit snow in Pennsylvania, then 15-mph traffic on I-81 at Hagerstown, Md. "We're going to go as far as we can go. ... If it doesn't get better, we're going to just get a hotel."

More than 1,200 flights were canceled by mid-

day, according to FlightAware.com, and some airlines said they would waive change fees. Delays of more than an hour were reported Wednesday at the three New York City-area airports, the Federal Aviation Administration said. In Arkansas, some of the nearly 200,000 people who lost power could be without it for as long as a week because of snapped poles and wires after ice and 10 inches of snow coated power lines, said the state's

largest utility, Entergy Arkansas. Gov. Mike Beebe sent out National Guard teams, and Humvees transported medical workers and patients. Snow hadn't fallen in Little Rock on Christmas since 1926, but the capital ended Tuesday with 10.3 inches of it. Other states also had scattered outages. Duke Energy said it had nearly 300 outages in Indiana, with few left in Ohio by early afternoon after scores were reported in the morning.

As the storm moved east, New England state highway departments were treating roads and getting ready to mobilize with snowfall forecasts of a foot or more that was expected to start falling late Wednesday and through Thursday. "People are picking up salt and a lot of shovels today," said Andy Greenwood, an assistant manager at Aubuchon Hardware in Keene, N.H.

As usual, winter-sports enthusiasts welcomed the snow. At Smiling Hill Farm in Maine, Warren Knight was hoping for enough snow to allow the opening of trails. "We watch the weather more carefully for cross-country skiing than we do for farming. And we're pretty diligent about farming. We're glued to the weather radio," said Knight, who described the weather at the 500-acre farm in Westbrook as being akin to the prizes in "Cracker Jacks — we don't know what we're going to get."

Behind the storm, Mississippi's governor declared states of emergency in eight counties with more than 25 people reported injured and 70 homes left damaged. □



# US Treasury to take steps to avoid hitting borrowing limit

C. S. RUGABER  
Associated Press

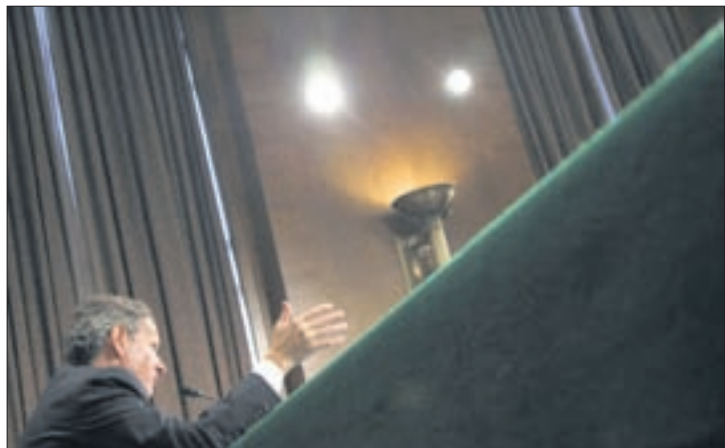
**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The U.S. Treasury Department will begin taking steps to delay hitting the government's \$16.4 trillion borrowing limit on Dec. 31.

to avoid a series of tax increases and spending cuts, known as the "fiscal cliff," that are scheduled to take effect in the new year. Obama has sought to include an increase in the borrowing limit in the talks.

ing limit.

The borrowing limit is the amount of debt the government can pile up. The government accumulates debt two ways: It borrows money from investors by issuing Treasury bonds, and it borrows from itself, mostly from Social Security pensions.

In 2011, Congress raised the limit to nearly \$16.4 trillion from \$14.3 trillion. Three decades ago, the national debt was \$908 billion. But Washington spent more than it took in, and the debt rose steadily — surpassing \$1 trillion in 1982, then \$5 trillion in 1996. It reached \$10 trillion in 2008 as the financial crisis and recession dried up tax revenue and as the government spent more on unemployment benefits and other programs. In August 2011, the rating agency Standard & Poor's stunned the world by stripping the U.S. government of its prized AAA bond rating because it feared that America's dysfunctional political system couldn't deliver credible plans to reduce the federal government's debt. S&P decried American "political brinkmanship" and concluded that "the differences between political parties have proven to be extraordinarily difficult to bridge." □



The U.S. Treasury Department announced Wednesday, Dec. 26, 2012, it will begin taking steps this week to delay hitting the government's \$16.4 trillion borrowing limit. Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner says in a letter to congressional leaders that the department will take several accounting measures to save approximately \$200 billion beginning next year. The government borrows about \$100 billion a month, so that would

(AP Photo/Haraz N. Ghanbari)

Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner said in a letter Wednesday to congressional leaders that the department will use accounting measures to save approximately \$200 billion, which could keep the government from reaching the limit for about two months. The move comes as President Barack Obama and the Republican congressional leadership are locked in negotiations over how

But House of Representatives Speaker John Boehner and other Republican leaders have demanded concessions in return. The negotiations hit a stalemate last week. Obama and lawmakers are returning to Washington this week to resume talks.

Geithner says the negotiations over tax and spending policies make it difficult to predict how long he can delay reaching the borrow-

## AMERICAN BRIEFS

### Settlement reached in Toyota case

**LOS ANGELES (AP)** — Toyota Motor Corp. said Wednesday it has reached a settlement worth more than \$1 billion in a case involving hundreds of lawsuits over acceleration problems. The company said the deal will resolve cases involving motorists who said the value of their vehicles was adversely affected by previous recalls. Lawyer Steve Berman said the settlement is the largest in U.S. history involving automobile defects. The proposed deal was filed Wednesday and must receive the approval of a federal judge. As part of the settlement, Toyota said it will offer cash payments to eligible customers who sold or turned in their leased vehicles between September 2009 and December 2010. □

### Newtown requesting a halt to gifts

**NEWTOWN, Connecticut (AP)** — Officials in Newtown, Connecticut, are asking people to stop sending gifts to the grief-stricken community, saying they're deeply grateful but can't handle the donation deluge. The town's first selectman, police chief and mayor made the request Wednesday through an editor at The Newtown Bee newspaper. They say gifts including artwork, school supplies and blankets have arrived from around the world, and the small community's ability to process, store and distribute the goods was quickly overwhelmed. The officials are asking people to temporarily stop sending gifts and instead distribute them locally in memory of the victims. □

### McGrath: Ex-president's fever rising

**HOUSTON (AP)** — A "stubborn" fever that kept former President George H.W. Bush in a hospital over Christmas has gotten worse, and doctors have put him on a liquids-only diet, his spokesman said Wednesday. Jim McGrath, Bush's spokesman in Houston, had said earlier in the day that the fever had gone away, but he later corrected himself. "It's an elevated fever, so it's actually gone up in the last day or two," McGrath told The Associated Press. "It's a stubborn fever that won't go away." Doctors have run tests and are treating the fever with Tylenol, but they still haven't nailed down a cause, McGrath said. Doctors also have put Bush on a liquid diet, though McGrath could not say why. □

### Ex-Nazi guard dead in Pennsylvania

**PITTSBURGH (AP)** — A lawyer says a former Nazi concentration camp guard who had been fighting attempts to deport him from the U.S. has died in Pennsylvania. Attorney Adrian Roe says 88-year-old Anton Geiser died over the weekend and was buried Monday in Hermitage. He'd been living in Pennsylvania for more than 50 years but didn't tell his family about the Nazi service until 2004, when the Justice Department began legal proceedings. Geiser has said he was forced to join the SS at the age of 17 in 1942 and that he never killed anyone. But federal prosecutors say his work as a concentration camp guard made him a party to the persecution of countless men, women and children. □

### US terror suspects pleads not guilty

**MOBILE, Alabama (AP)** — A man pleaded not guilty on Wednesday to charges of providing support to international terrorists. U.S. Magistrate Judge Katherine Nelson set a tentative trial date of March 3 for Randy Lamar Rasheed Wilson, 25. □

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## NEW LOCATION

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## NY firemen's killer mapped out plan for slayings

GEORGE M. WALSH  
MARY ESCH

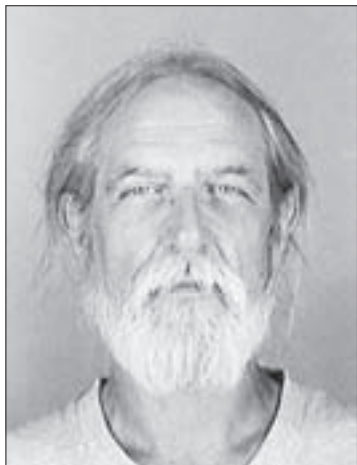
Associated Press

WEBSTER, New York (AP) —

The ex-convict turned sniper who lured two firefighters to their deaths by setting his house on fire wanted to make sure his goodbye note was legible, typing out his desire to "do what I like doing best, killing people," police said. Charred remains found in the home were thought to be those of his sister.

Police said 62-year-old William Spengler brought plenty of ammunition for three weapons including a military-style assault rifle as he set out to burn down his upstate New York neighborhood just before sunrise on Christmas Eve. The rifle was the same make and

caliber weapon used in this month's school shooting in



This 2006 image shows William H. Spengler Jr., 62. Authorities say Spengler set a house and car ablaze Monday, Dec. 24, 2012 in Webster, N.Y., and then opened fire, killing two firefighters and wounding two others. After exchanging gunfire with police, Spengler also killed himself.

(AP Photo)

Newtown, Connecticut.

"He was equipped to go to war, kill innocent people," Webster Police Chief Gerald Pickering said of a felon who wasn't allowed to possess weapons because of his criminal past. Spengler had served 17 years in prison for manslaughter in the 1980 killing of his grandmother with a hammer.

When firefighters arrived, Spengler unleashed a torrent of bullets, shattering the windshield of the fire truck that volunteer firefighter and police Lt. Michael Chiapperini, 43, was driving. Fellow firefighter Tomasz Kaczowka, 19, was killed as well.

Two other firefighters were struck by bullets. They remained hospitalized in stable condition and were

expected to survive.

Spengler killed himself as seven houses burned. His body was found on a nearby beach hours after the attack.

Investigators on Tuesday found a body in the Spengler home, presumably that of the sister a neighbor said Spengler hated: 67-year-old Cheryl Spengler.

Pickering said it was unclear whether the person died before or during the fire.

"It was a raging inferno in there," Pickering said.

Residents of the neighborhood who had been evacuated by armored vehicle were allowed to return Tuesday.

Spengler's motive was unclear, Pickering said, even as authorities began ana-

lyzing the two- to three-page typewritten note he left behind.

The police chief declined to reveal the note's full content or say where it was found. He read only one line: "I still have to get ready to see how much of the neighborhood I can burn down, and do what I like doing best, killing people."

It remained unknown what set Spengler off, but a next-door neighbor, Roger Vercruysse, noted that he loved his mother, Arline, who died in October.

Spengler had lived a quiet life after he was freed from prison. That ended Monday morning. "I'm not sure we'll ever know what was going through his mind," Pickering said. □

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## NORAD says record number of calls to track Santa

**PETERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Colorado (AP)** — Volunteers at a U.S. Air Force base monitoring Santa Claus' progress around the world answered a record number of calls from children — and some adults — wanting to know everything from Saint Nick's age to how reindeer fly. Oh, and when are the presents coming? Hundreds of volunteers were answering the phones

ringing nonstop Monday at Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado, headquarters of the North American Aerospace Command's annual Santa-tracking operation. NORAD, a joint U.S.-Canada command responsible for protecting the skies over both nations, says its Santa-tracking rite was born of a humble mistake in a newspaper ad in 1955. The ad in a Colorado Springs newspaper invited

children to call Santa but inadvertently listed the phone number for the Continental Air Defense Command, NORAD's predecessor, also based in Colorado Springs. Officers played along. Since then, NORAD Tracks Santa has gone global, posting updates for nearly 1.2 million Facebook fans and 104,000 Twitter fol-

lowers. "Need a Spanish speaker!" one organizer called as he rushed out of one of three phone rooms. Volunteer Sara Berghoff was caught off-guard when a child called to see if Santa could be especially kind this year to the families affected by the recent Connecticut school shooting. "I'm from Newtown,

for sure, but NORAD intelligence indicates Santa is at least 16 centuries old." One little boy phoned in to ask what time Santa delivered toys to heaven, said volunteer Jennifer Eckels, who took the call. The boy's mother got on the line to explain that his sister had died this year. "I think Santa headed there

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**Volunteers take phone calls from children asking where Santa is and when he will deliver presents to their house, during the annual NORAD Tracks Santa Operation, at the North American Aerospace Defense Command, or NORAD, at Peterson Air Force Base, in Colorado Springs, Colo., Monday Dec. 24, 2012. Over a thousand volunteers at NORAD handle more than 100,000 thousand phone calls from children around the world every Christmas Eve, with NORAD continually projecting Santa's supposed progress delivering presents.** (AP Photo/Brennan Linsley)

lowers. Spokeswoman 1st Lt. Stacey Fenton said that as of midnight, trackers had answered more than 111,000 calls, breaking last year's record of 107,000. First lady Michelle Obama, who is spending the holidays with her family in Hawaii, also joined in answering calls as she has in recent years. She spent about 30 minutes talking with children from across the country. NORAD got calls from 220 countries and territories last year, and non-English-speakers called this year as well. Volunteers who speak other languages get green Santa hats and a placard listing their languages so organizers can find them

Connecticut, where the shooting was," she remembered the child asking. "Is it possible that Santa can bring extra presents so I can deliver them to the families that lost kids?" Sara, just 13 herself, gathered her thoughts quickly. "If I can get ahold of him, I'll try to get the message to him," she told the child. Other questions required the volunteers to think fast: "How do reindeer fly?" "How many elves does Santa have?" "Does Santa leave presents for dogs?" "How old is Santa?" The answer to that one is in the FAQs that NORAD hands out to volunteers: "It's hard to know

first," Eckels told him. NORAD suggested that its volunteers tell callers that Santa won't drop off the presents until all the kids in the home are asleep. "Ohhhhhhh," said an 8-year-old. "Thank you so much for that information," said a grateful mom. A young boy called to ask if Santa was real. Air Force Maj. Jamie Humphries, who took the call, said, "I'm 37 years old, and I believe in Santa, and if you believe in him as well, then he must be real." The boy turned from the phone and yelled to others, "I told you guys he was real!" □





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Starbucks is asking employees at cafes in the Washington, D.C., area to scribble the words "Come Together" on cups for drink orders on Thursday and Friday. CEO Howard Schultz says the words are intended as a message to lawmakers about the damage being caused by the divisive negotiations over the "fiscal cliff." It's the first time employees at Starbucks cafes are being asked to write anything other than customers' names on cups. (AP Photo/Ted S. Warren)

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Starbucks is using its coffee cups to jump into the political fray in Washington. The world's biggest coffee chain is asking employees at cafes in the Washington, D.C. area to scribble the words "Come Together" on cups for drink orders on Thursday and Friday. CEO Howard Schultz says the words are intended as a message to lawmakers about the damage being caused by the divisive negotiations over the "fiscal cliff." It's the first time employees

at Starbucks cafes are being asked to write anything other than customers' names on cups. While companies generally steer clear of politics to avoid alienating customers, the plea to "Come Together" is a sentiment unlikely to cause controversy. If anything, Starbucks could score points with customers and burnish its image as a socially conscious company. This isn't the first time the coffee chain is using its platform to send a political message. In the summer

# Starbucks cups to come with a political message

of 2011, Schultz also asked other CEOs and the public to stop making campaign contributions until politicians found a way to deal with a crisis over the debt ceiling that led to a downgrade in the country's credit rating.

For the latest push, Starbucks is taking out an ad

in the Washington Post on Thursday showing a cup with the words "Come Together" on it.

The "fiscal cliff" refers to the steep tax hikes and spending cuts set to take effect Jan. 1, unless the White House and Congress reach an agreement to avoid them.

As for whether customers will be confused by the "Come Together" message or understand that it's related to the fiscal cliff, Schultz said in an interview that there's wide public awareness about the negotiations and that Starbucks will use social media to explain the effort. □

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### ANNOUNCEMENT

Post Aruba N.V. would like to inform its clients on the opening hours:  
**On December 28, 2012:**

- The offices of Oranjestad, Harbor Area, Santa Cruz and San Nicolas will be open until 12pm.
- The office Palm Beach Plaza Mall will be open from 10am until 6pm.

**On December 29, 2012:**

- The office of Palm Beach Plaza Mall will be open from 8am until 6pm.
- The office of Harbour Area will be open from 9am until 3pm.

**On December 31, 2012, January 1 and 2, 2013:**

- All the Aruba Post offices will be closed. The offices of Post Aruba will open for normal business on January 3, 2013.

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# Morsi: Egypt's constitution dawn of new republic

**SARAH EL DEEB**  
**Associated Press**

**CAIRO (AP)** — Egypt's Islamist president proclaimed the country's newly adopted constitution as the dawning of a "new republic" in a television address Wednesday, calling on the opposition to join a dialogue with him after a month of violent turmoil and focus on repairing a damaged economy.

Mohammed Morsi sought to present the Islamist-drafted charter as the turning of a historic page for Egypt, but his speech did little to ease the suspicions of those who fear he and his Muslim Brotherhood are entrenching their power. He offered no concrete gestures to an opposition that has so far rejected his dialogue and vowed to fight the constitution.

Instead, with a triumphalist tone, he presented the constitution, which was approved by nearly 64 percent of voters in a referendum that ended last weekend, as creating a democracy with balanced powers between branches of government and political freedoms.

"We don't want to return to an era of one opinion and fake, manufactured majorities. The maturity and consciousness (of voters) heralds that Egypt has set on a path

of democracy with no return," Morsi said. "Regardless of the results, for the sake of building the nation, efforts must unite. There is no alternative to a dialogue that is now a necessity."

The opposition says the constitution allows a dictatorship of the majority — which Islamists have won



**In this image released by the Egyptian Presidency, President Mohammed Morsi prepares to make a televised address to the nation in Cairo, Egypt, Wednesday, Dec. 26, 2012. Morsi says the new constitution establishes Egypt's new republic, calling on opposition to join dialogue to heal rifts and shift the focus toward repairing the economy.**

(AP Photo/Egyptian Presidency)

with repeated election victories the past two years. It says the charter's provisions for greater implementation of Islamic law, or Shariah, would allow Islamists who hold the presidency and overwhelmingly dominate the temporary legislature to restrict civil rights and limit the freedoms of minorities and women.

Opponents also say the low turnout in the referendum, just under 33 percent, undermines the document's legitimacy. The main opposition National Salvation Front said it would study Morsi's speech to see if his call for dialogue is serious. But it dismissed a "national dialogue" body that he launched before the results emerged as "farfetched and simply theater."

The dialogue is mainly between Morsi and other Islamists. "The president is talking to himself," said Hussein Abdel-Ghani, a leading figure in the Front told a press conference after Morsi's speech. He said the opposition would only enter "real and effective" talks, suggesting Morsi was aiming to assuage the United States, which has called for com-

promise and talks, without offering real substance. The Front said it will continue to be in opposition to the current rulers who "seek to establish a repressive regime in the name of religion."

Morsi's prerecorded address was his first speech since Dec. 6 after laying low amid the turmoil leading up to the referendum. It came a day after official referendum results were announced, formally bringing into effect the first constitution since the ouster of authoritarian leader Hosni Mubarak in February 2011. Morsi's main message: it is time to put aside differences and start "the epic battle for construction and production." He said he had asked his Prime Minister Hesham Kandil to make changes to his Cabinet to meet the "needs of the coming period" and to introduce measure to facilitate investment. But he made no gesture of inviting the opposition to join the reshuffled government.

"As we set on a new phase moving from the first republic to the second republic, a republic that has this constitution as its strong base ... I renew my pledge to respect the law and constitution," Morsi said, repeating his oath of office based on the new charter. □

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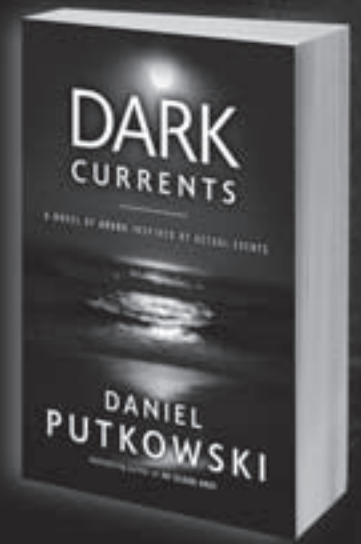
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## Anti-US adoption bill endorsed by Russian parliament

**MANSUR MIROVALEV**  
**NATALIYA VASILYEVA**  
**Associated Press**

**MOSCOW (AP)** — Defying a storm of domestic and international criticism, Russia moved toward finalizing a ban on Americans adopting Russian children, as Parliament's upper house voted unanimously Wednesday in favor of a measure that President Vladimir Putin has indicated he will sign into law.

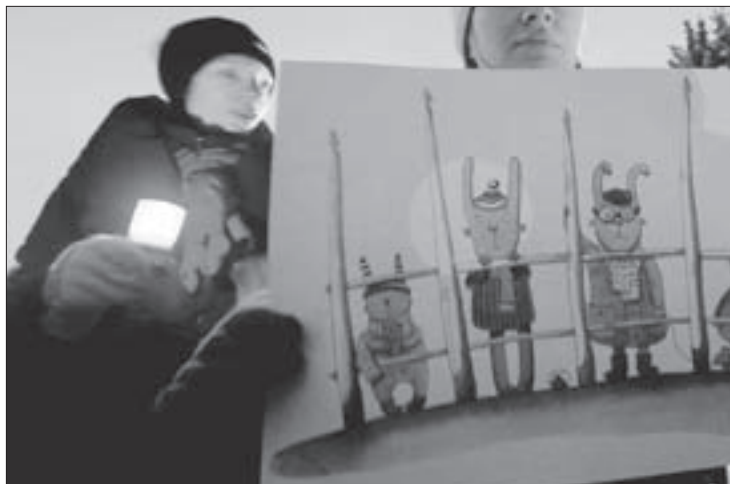
The bill is widely seen as the Kremlin's retaliation against an American law that calls for sanctions against Russians deemed to be human rights violators. It comes as Putin takes an increasingly confrontational attitude toward the West, brushing aside concerns about a crackdown on dissent and democratic freedoms.

Dozens of Russian children close to being adopted by American families now will almost certainly be blocked from leaving the country. The law also cuts off the main international adoption route for Russian children stuck in often dismal orphanages: Tens of thousands of Russian youngsters have been adopted in the U.S. in the past 20 years. There are about 740,000 children without parental care in Russia, according to UNICEF.

All 143 members of the Federation Council present voted to support the bill, which has sparked criticism from both the U.S. and Russian officials, activists and artists, who say it victimizes children by depriving them of the chance to escape the squalor of orphanage life. The vote comes days after

Parliament's lower house overwhelmingly approved the ban.

The U.S. State Department said Wednesday it regretted the Russian parliament's decision.



Opposition activists protest against a bill banning U.S. adoptions of Russian children in St. Petersburg, Russia, Wednesday, Dec. 26, 2012. Defying a storm of domestic and international criticism, Russia moved toward finalizing a ban on Americans adopting Russian children, as Parliament's upper house voted unanimously Wednesday in favor of a measure that President Vladimir Putin has indicated he will sign into law.

(AP Photo/Dmitry Lovetsky)

ment's decision.

"Since 1992, American families have welcomed more than 60,000 Russian children into their homes, providing them with an opportunity to grow up in a family environment," spokesman Patrick Ventrell said in a statement from Washington. "The bill passed by Russia's parliament would prevent many

children from enjoying this opportunity ...

"It is misguided to link the fate of children to unrelated political considerations," he said.

Seven people with posters protesting the bill were detained outside the Council before Wednesday's vote. "Children get frozen in the Cold War," one poster read. □

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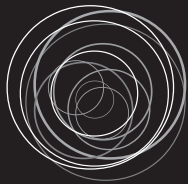
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## Mandela released from SA hospital

C. TORCHIA

Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) —

Former South African President Nelson Mandela was released Wednesday from the hospital after being treated for a lung infection and having gallstones removed, a government spokesman said.

The 94-year-old anti-apartheid icon will continue to receive medical care at home.

in the Johannesburg neighborhood of Houghton until he fully recovers, said presidential spokesman Mac Maharaj.

"We thank the public and the media for the good wishes and for according Madiba and the family the necessary privacy," said Maharaj in a statement, using Mandela's clan name, a term of affection.

The statement requested that Mandela's privacy

expectations, that those expectations are fulfilled," he said.

"In this case, we say in the same tone, in the Christmas mood and in the Christmas season, let him stick around for a while!"

Mandela is revered around the world as a symbol of sacrifice and reconciliation, his legacy forged in the fight against apartheid, the system of white minority rule that imprisoned him for 27 years.

The Nobel laureate served one five-year term as president after South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994. Although the country today struggles with poverty and inequality, Mandela is widely credited with helping to avert race-driven chaos as South Africa emerged from apartheid.

South African President Jacob Zuma was among those who joined Mandela's wife, Graca Machel, and other family members in wishing a Merry Christmas to Mandela at his hospital bedside in Pretoria, the South African capital.

"I think he is an icon of hope and we are very excited" that Mandela is out of the hospital, said Siphosibo Sibeko, a Soweto resident. "I personally know that he is one of the people that inspired me."

He inspires a lot of people and we are excited that he has been released. We wish him many more joyous years and good health." □



In this file photo, former South African President, Nelson Mandela leaves the chapel after attending the funeral of his great-granddaughter Zenani Mandela in Johannesburg, South Africa. Mandela was released Wednesday, Dec. 26, 2012 from the hospital after being treated for a lung infection and having gallstones removed, a government spokesman said.

(AP Photo/Siphiwe Sibeko, Pool)

Mandela had been in the hospital since Dec. 8. In recent days, officials have said he was improving and in good spirits, but doctors have taken extraordinary care with his health because of his age.

Mandela was released Wednesday evening and will receive "home-based high care" at his residence

continue to be respected "in order to allow for the best possible conditions for full recovery."

David Phetoe, a resident of the Johannesburg township of Soweto, reacted with joy when he heard that Mandela was no longer in a hospital.

"It's not always the case, when people offer great

## New Japan PM: Saving economy is top mission

ERIC TALMADGE

ASSOCIATED PRESS

TOKYO (AP) — Shinzo Abe

took office as Japan's seventh prime minister in six years Wednesday and vowed to overcome the deep-rooted economic and diplomatic crises facing his country.

Abe was elected as Japan's leader hours earlier Wednesday, bringing back to power the conservative, pro-business Liberal Democratic Party that governed for most of the post-World War II era.

It replaces the liberal-leaning government of the Democratic Party of Japan that lasted three years.

"A strong economy is the source of energy for Japan. Without regaining a strong economy, there is no future for Japan,"

Abe told his first news conference after becoming prime minister for the second time.

Calling his administration a "crisis breakthrough Cabinet," Abe promised to launch bold economic measures to pull Japan out of deflation.

He also vowed to step up an alliance with the United States to stabilize Japan's diplomacy shaken by increasing territorial threats from its neighbors.

Abe, whose nationalist positions have in the past angered Japan's neighbors,

was also prime minister in 2006-2007 before resigning for health reasons that he



Japan's new Prime Minister Shinzo Abe speaks during his first press conference at the prime minister's official residence in Tokyo Wednesday, Dec. 26, 2012. (AP Photo/Shizuo Kambayashi)

says are no longer an issue. The outspoken and often hawkish leader has promised to restore growth to an economy that has been struggling for 20 years.

His administration also faces souring relations with China and a complex debate over whether resource-poor Japan should wean itself off nuclear energy after last year's earthquake and tsunami caused a meltdown at an atomic power plant.

On top of that, he will have to win over a public that gave his party a lukewarm mandate in elections on Dec. 16, along with keeping at bay a still-powerful opposition in parliament. □

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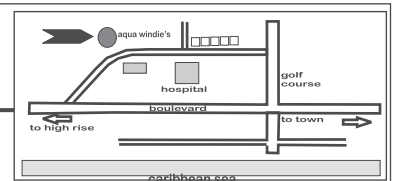
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# Spain seizes 11 tons of hashish; 35 arrested

ALAN CLENDENNING  
Associated Press

**MADRID (AP)** — Spanish police seized 11 metric tons (12.1 U.S. tons) of hashish smuggled from Morocco on trucks with fuel tanks rigged to hide the drugs and arrested 35 people in what was described as the breakup of a major smuggling ring feeding the European market, authorities said Wednesday. The haul was displayed across a patio outside the headquarters of the National Police, with some hashish packaged in small amounts resembling bars of soap, while much of it was held in suitcases made out of tape and packaging material.

It was described as one of Spain's biggest drug seizures, but officials did not provide details of previous confiscations for comparison purposes.

Authorities said the hashish traveled in trucks that took cargo ferries from Morocco to southern Spain, and were then driven to a Madrid suburb where the hashish was extracted from the vehicles' fuel tanks. From there, some of the hashish was sent to Madrid for sale while the rest was put aboard other trucks carrying legal merchandise to countries including Belgium, Britain, France and Holland.

Those arrested included 31 Moroccans, three Spaniards and a Belgian woman. One of the Spaniards and the Belgian woman were truckers driving rigs with loads of carrots and clothing with the hashish hidden amid the legitimate cargo, National Police chief Ignacio Cosido said. Cosido declined to put a value on the hashish seized except to say "it's very profitable."

Police in 17 raids also seized numerous bags of marijuana, €150,000 (\$198,000) in cash, 14 vehicles valued at €400,000 and 109 cell-phones during the course of an eight-month investigation that started when authorities broke up a Madrid hashish selling ring and went after that group's suppliers. □



A police officer stands behind part of a haul of hashish and marijuana in Madrid Wednesday Dec. 26, 2012. Spanish police have seized 11 metric tons (12.1 U.S. tons) of hashish smuggled from Morocco on trucks with tanks rigged to hide the drugs. Authorities said in a statement Wednesday that the hashish was sent to a Madrid suburb for distribution to countries including Belgium, Britain, France and Holland. (AP Photo/Paul White)

## Career Opportunities

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# Cubans hold their breath as Chavez fights cancer

**PETER ORSI**  
**Associated Press**

**HAVANA (AP)** — Cubans who were tuned in to the nightly soap opera on a recent Saturday received a sudden burst of bad news, from the other side of the Caribbean.

State TV cut to the presidential palace in Caracas, Venezuela, where President Hugo Chavez revealed that his cancer had returned. Facing his fourth related surgery in 18 months, he grimly named Vice President Nicolas Maduro as his possible successor.

The news shocked not only Venezuelans but millions of Cubans who have come to depend on Chavez's largesse for everything from subsidized oil to cheap loans. Venezuela supplies about half of Cuba's energy needs, meaning the island's economy would be in for a huge shock and likely recession if a post-Chavez president forced the island to pay full price for oil.

Despite the drama, the news likely wasn't a surprise to Cuba's Communist government, and not only because Chavez has been receiving medical care on the island.

Havana learned important lessons about overdepen-

dence when the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union threw the country into a deep crisis. Trying to avoid the consequences of a similar cut, the Cuban government has been diversifying its portfolio of economic partners in recent years, looking to Asia, Europe and other Latin American



**A mural featuring Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez, left, and Cuba's Fidel Castro, adorns a wall in Caracas, Venezuela.**  
(AP Photo/Ariana Cubillos)

nations, and is only about half as dependent on Caracas as it was on the former Soviet Union.

Cuba is also working to stimulate its economy back home by allowing more private-sector activity, giving a leg up to independent and cooperative farming, and decentralizing its sugar industry. A stronger Cuban economy would in theory have more

hard currency to pay for energy and other imports. Also getting off the ground is an experiment with independent nonfarm collectives that should be more efficient than state-run companies. And next year, another pilot program is planned for decentralized state enterprises that will

enjoy near-autonomy and be allowed to control most of their income.

"This could have good results," said a Cuban economist who spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to talk to the foreign media. Cuba "is also thinking of boosting foreign investment in areas of the national economy, including in restricted areas like the sugar industry."

One of the country's top goals has been to make the island's struggling economy less dependent on a single benefactor.

Under the leadership of Chavez, who regularly calls former Cuban President Fidel Castro his ideological father and has followed parts of the Communist leader's governance play-book, Venezuela has sent billions of dollars a year to Cuba through trade and petro-aid.

If Chavez's hand-picked successor, Vice President Maduro, were to take office, he would likely seek to continue the special relationship.


Opposition leader Henrique Capriles has said he wants to end the oil-for-services barter arrangements, but could find that easier said than done should he win. The two countries are intertwined in dozens of joint accords, and poor Venezuelans who benefit from free care by Cuban doctors would be loath to see that disappear.

"You can't flip the switch on a relationship like this," said Melissa Lockhart Fortner, a Cuba analyst at the Pacific Council on International Policy, a Los Angeles-based institute that focuses on global affairs. "It would be terrible politics for him.


... Switching that off would really endanger his support far too much for that to be really a feasible option."

For Cuba, Chavez's latest health scare capped off a year of disappointments in the island's attempt to wean itself from Venezuelan energy.

Three deep-water exploratory oil wells drilled off the west coast failed to yield a strike, and last month the only oil rig in the world capable of drilling there without violating U.S. sanctions sailed away with no return in sight. Yet time and again Havana has shown that it's nothing if not resilient, weathering everything from U.S.-backed invasion and assassination plots in the 1960s to the austere "Special Period" in the early 1990s, when the Soviet collapse sent Cuba's GDP plummeting 33 percent over four years. When hurricanes damaged the country's agriculture sector and the global financial crisis squeezed tourism four years ago, Cuba tightened its belt, slashed imports and survived. "Some people are saying the demise of Chavez is also going to be the demise of Communism in Cuba because the regime's going to collapse and the people are going to rise up," Feinberg said. □



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# Generous Donations Mark the Season of Giving

**PALM BEACH** – The Casino Cage Department at the Casino at the Radisson started collecting groceries on December 5th, and just in time for the Holidays made generous basket donations to Aruba's St. Anna's Church and Santa Teresita Church. This year the Casino Cage Department did not host its annual Christmas breakfast. Instead staffers organized a food drive, providing groceries for families of lesser means.



## Eugene Baith honored at Caribbean Palm Village!

**NOORD** – Interim General Manager Astrid Muller and President of the Board Ed Hayes recently congratulated resort guest Eugene Baith on a quarter of a century of vacations spent at their resort. Baith who bought a time-share condo unit at the Caribbean Palm Village Resort in 1987 reports he's been vacationing at that same spot ever since, never regretting the purchase, on the contrary, convincing many other Baith family members to make similar investments



and to join him on his favorite island, once a year, just before the holidays. Baith was presented with a commemorative plaque as a token of gratitude for his business and for his loyal friendship; he also posed for us with other family members who bought into the resort the following year. The weekly manager's cocktail party, entertained by the guest service department brings people together every Tuesday for cocktails and social interaction. □

In their quest for even more donations the Casino Cage Department asked all other casino employees to pitch in with the goal of collecting as many groceries as possible. The groceries were delivered to the Human Resources Department of the Radisson Aruba Resort Casino & Spa, thus putting hands together, helping make other families happy during the holiday season, and giving to others with an open heart. Pictured here the Casino Cage Department, grateful for everything there is, sharing the bounty with the community. □



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## Artist Marian Abath is December's Caribbean Queen



**PALM BEACH** – The Caribbean Queen at the Palm Beach Plaza Mall has been honoring one local female artist who lives and creates here, every month. For the store's first anniversary, for the month of December 2012, local glass artist Marian Abath is Caribbean Queen, prominently displaying her beautiful and bold artwork in the store.

The glass objects made by Marian Abath find their roots in her love for nature. The colors of Aruba are re-

flected in the glass paperweights she creates, as well as in her jewelry. Marian works with different internationally acclaimed glass techniques such as fusing, kiln casting, glass blowing and flame working. "I love working with the torch", she explains, "as it allows me to dedicate time, concentrating on my own thoughts and my own hands creating what I like."

Miriam and her artist husband Ciro launched Terrafuse –Aruba Glass & Ceramics, a foundation designed to promote the art of glass and ceramics on the island of Aruba, in 2008. A couple of years before that, they opened the first glass studio here. Nowadays, Marian teaches bead-making workshops to beginners and advanced bead-makers twice a week and the studio is open for visitors during those hours. She also teaches local youth, between the ages of 14 and 25, an initiative supported by Terrafuse foundation and the

Aruban government (UNOCA), keeping the price of the workshops low, aiming to teach the art form, yet also broaden students' horizons, letting them find out what they can do with their hands. The Marian Abath collection at Caribbean Queen includes colorful jewelry and art objects. Her work will be on display for the whole month of December. Everyone is invited to stop by the Caribbean Queen, on the first floor of the Palm Beach Plaza Mall, to browse and perhaps even make a purchase, as it is the season of giving.

A percentage of the each purchase is earmarked for an art-supporting charity on the island, such as The Pancake Gallery, Atelier 89 and The Aruba International Arts Foundation, AIAF, under the store's Repair of the World, Tikkun Olam program. Caribbean Queen offers gift-certificates in all denominations, which can never expire!

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# Beauty On The Beach

## Emily Graham

She is from New Jersey, USA. It is her first time in Aruba and she is on her honeymoon. What she loves the most of Aruba is sunshine! She is staying at the Occidental Grand.

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# MCC Aruba enjoys Holiday Dinner at Amazonia Churrascaria

**PALM BEACH** – MCC Aruba celebrated the conclusion of a successful business year, inviting all company associates for festive dinner at Aruba's most popular Brazilian-style steakhouse. While the company specializes in water related projects, its team of land-lubber, all devoted steak lovers, relished more than fifteen cuts of grilled to perfection beef, chicken, and lamb paired with a rich and varied salad bar selections. Pictured here, staff and management of MCC Aruba - the company operates in the three ABC islands, Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao - enjoying each other's company and the great food and ambiance at Amazonia Churrascaria. □



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# Christmas Morning 2012 in Chester, New Jersey!



**NEW JERSEY** - With the holidays on everybody's mind, Billy Murphy, born in Aruba in 1961, took the time to share this photo to remind all of us of the joy of seasonal Holiday weather \_ without having to be there in person to feel it! We love the Holiday Season on Aruba, but we love the snow better in pictures!  
HAPPY HOLIDAYS!  
Photo shared with the Aruba Today courtesy of Clyde Harms. □

## Catch your own dinner with Driftwood! Motto at Driftwood Restaurant: "From the pier to your plate!"



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**NBA Roundup**



Los Angeles Clippers center DeAndre Jordan (6) drives to the hoop as Denver Nuggets' Danilo Gallinari (8) of Italy and the Clippers' Blake Griffin look on during the first half of their NBA basketball game, Tuesday, Dec. 25, 2012, in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

**Clippers top NBA standings with 14th straight win**

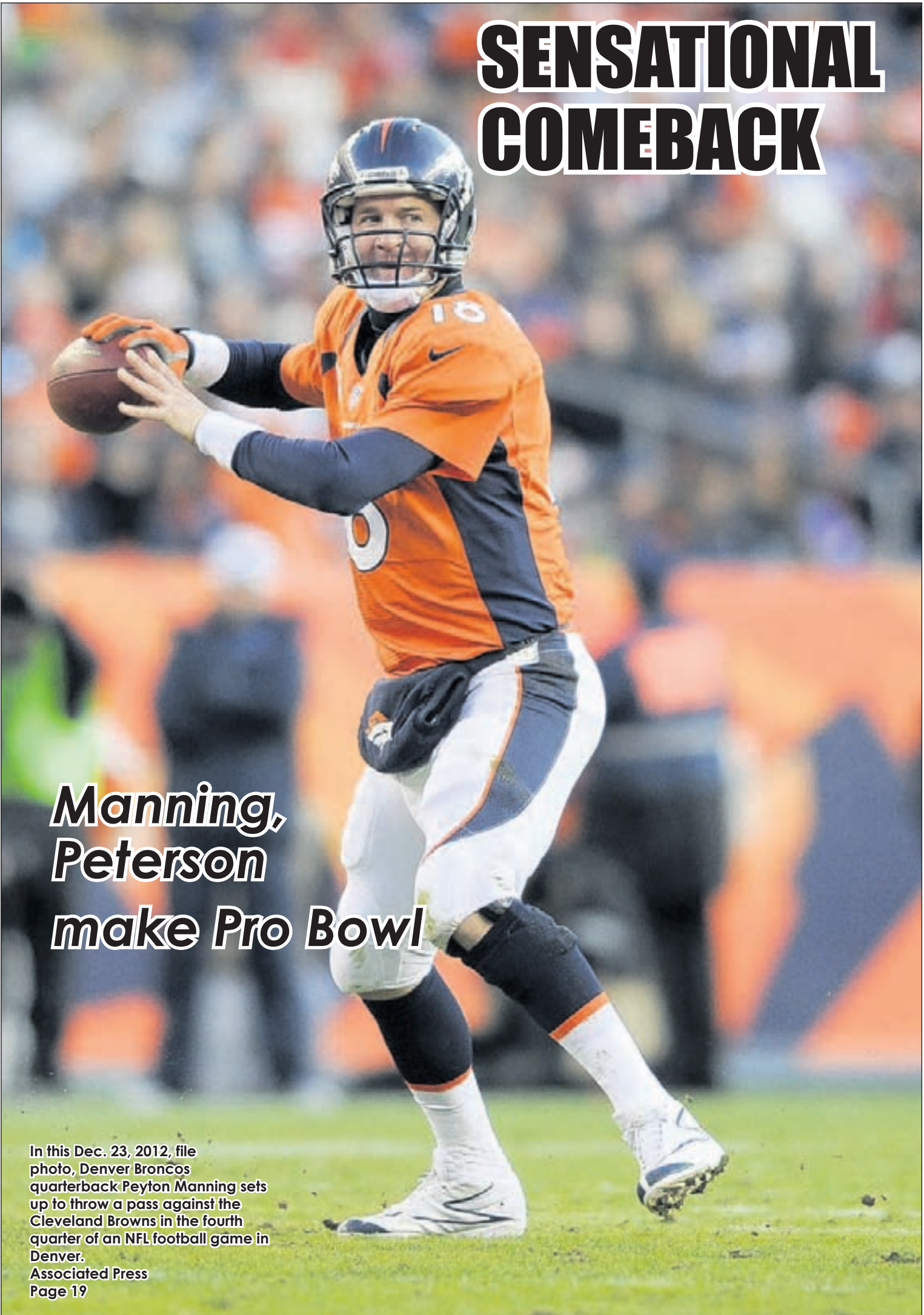
**LOS ANGELES (AP)** — The Los Angeles Clippers extended their franchise-record winning streak to 14 games by beating the Denver Nuggets 112-100 on Tuesday — and moved to the top of the NBA standings in the process.

Jamal Crawford led a dominant performance by the Los Angeles reserves with 22 points, while Matt Barnes added 20.

The Clippers' bench outscored the team's starters 64-48 in claiming the NBA's best record at 22-6, one win better than Oklahoma City. The Clippers haven't lost since Nov. 26 when the New Orleans Hornets handed them their fourth straight defeat.

Crawford's 3-pointer to open the fourth quarter pushed the Clippers' lead to 20 points and kept the starters on the bench for the final 12 minutes.

**Continued on page 20**



**SENSATIONAL COMEBACK**

**Manning, Peterson make Pro Bowl**

In this Dec. 23, 2012, file photo, Denver Broncos quarterback Peyton Manning sets up to throw a pass against the Cleveland Browns in the fourth quarter of an NFL football game in Denver.

Associated Press  
Page 19



# Seattle Mariners officially announce Raul Ibanez deal

**SEATTLE (AP)** — The Seattle Mariners have officially announced their \$2.75 million, one-year deal with outfielder Raul Ibanez, returning the veteran to where he began his major league career in 1996.

Seattle made the move official Wednesday after clearing a spot on its 40-man roster by designating for assignment right-handed pitcher D.J. Mitchell, who was acquired from the New York Yankees in the trade last July for Ichiro Suzuki.

The deal allows Ibanez to earn an additional \$1.25



million in performance bonuses. This will be his third stint with the Mariners, after rejoining them from 2004-08.

Seattle general manager Jack Zduriencik says the team wanted to add veteran leadership in the off-season, and Ibanez provides that. The 40-year-old Ibanez hit .240 with 19 homers and 62 RBIs in 384 at-bats for the Yankees last season. □

**In this Aug. 6, 2012, photo, New York Yankees' Raul Ibanez gets ready to bat against the Detroit Tigers in a baseball game in Detroit.**  
Associated Press



**In this July 7, 2012, photo, Pittsburgh Pirates closer Joel Hanrahan delivers during the ninth inning of a baseball game against the San Francisco Giants in Pittsburgh.**

Associated Press

## Red Sox get closer Hanrahan from Pirates

**HOWARD ULMAN**  
AP Sports Writer

**BOSTON (AP)** — The Red Sox have acquired All-Star closer Joel Hanrahan from the Pittsburgh Pirates in a six-player deal.

Boston completed the trade Wednesday, also receiving infielder Brock Holt. The Red Sox gave up right-handers Mark Melancon and Stolmy Pimentel, infielder Ivan DeJesus Jr. and first baseman-outfielder Jerry Sands.

Over the past two seasons, the right-handed Hanrahan had 76 saves, fourth most in the National League, and a 2.24 ERA. Last season, he was 5-2 with a 2.72 ERA and 36 saves.

Holt spent most of last season at Double-A Altoona,

then hit .292 in 24 games with the Pirates, all in September.

Melancon was 0-2 with a 6.20 ERA in 41 relief appearances in his only season with Boston.

Pimentel spent the season at Double-A Portland. Sands and DeJesus were obtained in a trade that sent Josh Beckett, Carl Crawford and Adrian Gonzalez to the Los Angeles Dodgers on Aug. 25.

The Red Sox also announced the signing of free agent shortstop Stephen Drew, who agreed to a one-year contract early last week. That \$9.5 million deal was contingent on the former Oakland Athletic and Arizona Diamondback infielder passing a physical. □

## Rangers complete deal for free agent C Pierzynski

**ARLINGTON, Texas (AP)** — The Texas Rangers have completed a one-year contract with free agent catcher A.J. Pierzynski.

Terms of the deal announced Wednesday weren't released. The two-time All-Star who was passed over for what would have been his third selection by Rangers manager Ron Washington could be the starter for Texas and figures to see time at designated hitter. Pierzynski, who turns 36 on Sunday, hit .278 with a career-high 27 home runs in 135 games for the Chicago White Sox last season. □



**In this June 25, 2012, photo, Chicago White Sox catcher A.J. Pierzynski pauses during a baseball game against the Minnesota Twins in Minneapolis.**

Associated Press

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# Peyton Manning, Adrian Peterson make NFL Pro Bowl

**BARRY WILNER**

**AP Pro Football Writer**

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Peyton Manning and Adrian Peterson have highlighted their sensational comeback seasons by making the NFL Pro Bowl.

Also selected Wednesday to the NFL's all-star game was Washington Redskins rookie quarterback Robert Griffin III. Manning missed all of the 2011 season with neck and back problems that required several operations. He then signed with Denver as a free agent and has led the Broncos on a 10-game winning streak to take the AFC West.

"I know there's great players out there in the NFL, but there's some great players on this team this year that deserve to go," said Manning, who ranks fourth in league passing and has thrown 34 touchdowns and 11 interceptions.

Four other Broncos made the roster in the American Football Conference: defensive end Elvis Dumervil, linebacker Von Miller, cornerback Champ Bailey and tackle Ryan Clady.

Minnesota's Peterson tore up his left knee on Christmas Eve last year, underwent major surgery, then was back for the season opener. He's gone from uncertain to unstoppable, running away with the rushing title with a career-high 1,898 yards and lifting the Vikings toward a possible spot in the playoffs, with one game left to play.

"Coming into the season after going through the rehab process, I just told myself that I wanted to lead my team to a championship and make sure that I contribute and do my part," Peterson said. "I've been doing it."

Griffin is one of three rookie QBs who had superb debut seasons, along with Andrew Luck of Indianapolis and Russell Wilson of Seattle. Luck and Wilson weren't voted to the Pro Bowl by players, coaches and fans, although their teams are in the playoffs; Griffin can get to the post-season if Washington beats

Dallas on Sunday.

"You can't play down those kinds of things," Griffin said. "I've always said my whole football career that you don't play for awards. They just come. You don't say you're going to win the Heisman (trophy). You don't say you're going to win MVP. You go out and you prove it on the field, and if everyone feels that way then they'll give you that award."

San Francisco had nine players selected for the Pro Bowl — the most of any NFL team — including six from its second-ranked defense. Houston was next with eight players, six on offense.

Kansas City, despite its 2-13 record that is tied with Jacksonville for worst in the league, had five Pro Bowlers, including running back Jamaal Charles, who like Peterson is coming back from a torn ACL.

One other rookie, Minnesota kicker Blair Walsh, was chosen. Walsh has nine field goals of at least 50 yards, an NFL mark.



Minnesota Vikings running back Adrian Peterson (28) tries to turn upfield as Houston Texans' Connor Barwin (98) tackles him during the second quarter of an NFL football game Sunday, Dec. 23, 2012, in Houston.

Associated Press

Another record setter will be heading to Honolulu for the Jan. 27 Pro Bowl: Detroit

wide receiver Calvin Johnson. Johnson broke Jerry Rice's single-season yards

receiving record and has 1,892 yards with one game left. □

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Oklahoma City Thunder's Kevin Durant (35) drives against Miami Heat's LeBron James during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Miami, Tuesday, Dec. 25, 2012. The Heat won 103-97.

Associated Press

## NBA Roundup

Continued from page 17

Crawford, who leads the NBA's reserves in scoring, topped 20 points for the 12th time this season. Chris Paul led Los Angeles' starters with 14 points, while Blake Griffin had 13. Kosta Koufos and Jordan Hamilton each scored 16 points to lead the Nuggets. The Heat survived a frantic finish to beat the Thunder

for the fifth straight time going back to June's title series and improve their season record to 19-6, matching the team's best 25-game start.

Miami 103, Oklahoma City 97

LeBron James finished with 29 points, nine assists and eight rebounds, Dwyane Wade scored 21 and Mario Chalmers had a season-high 20 for the defending NBA champions.

Kevin Durant scored 33 points and Russell Westbrook added 21 for Oklahoma City, but both Thunder stars missed potentially game-tying 3-point attempts in the final seconds. Serge Ibaka and Kevin Martin each added 15 for the Thunder, who have dropped two straight for the first time this season.

Oklahoma City got within one when Durant made a jumper over James with less than a minute to play, but Miami hit all five of its free throws in the final moments to seal the victory. Los Angeles 100, New York 94

Kobe Bryant engineered a second-half comeback to help the Lakers win their fifth straight game earlier in Los Angeles.

Bryant scored 34 points in his NBA-record 15th Christmas Day game and Metta World Peace added 20 points and seven rebounds while defending Carmelo Anthony, whose 34 points led the Knicks.

Bryant, the league's leading scorer, has topped 30 or more points in nine straight games.

The Lakers improved their record to 14-14 — 9-9 under new coach Mike D'Antoni — and upped their holiday record to 21-18, including 13-9 at home.

The Knicks controlled most of the game behind Anthony and J.R. Smith, who had 24 points. But they struggled offensively in the fourth

quarter, when Anthony was limited to seven points and Smith had five.

Steve Nash had 16 points, 11 assists and six rebounds in his second game with the Lakers in nearly two months. He missed 24 straight games while recovering from a small fracture in his lower left leg.

Dwight Howard had 14 points and 12 rebounds, and Pau Gasol added 13 points and eight rebounds. Boston 93, Brooklyn 76

The Celtics easily defeated the Nets in the teams' first meeting since their contentious game a month ago in which three players were ejected for fighting.

Rajon Rondo scored 19 points and rookie Jared Sullinger tied a career high with 16 points. Rondo had been thrown out of the Nets' Nov. 28 victory in Boston after shoving Brooklyn's Kris Humphries into the courtside seats.

Gerald Wallace and Brook Lopez each scored 15 for the Nets, who have lost four of five.

There was a brief skirmish in the fourth quarter that resulted in four technical fouls, but that was the most fight the Nets put up in a disappointing performance on the national stage of the Christmas opener.

Deron Williams had only 10 points on 3-of-7 shooting and Joe Johnson shot 4 of 14 for his 12 points.

Houston 120, Chicago 97 Houston outscored Chicago 31-19 in the second quarter to open up a 17-point halftime lead the Bulls couldn't overcome.

James Harden scored 26 points, Jeremy Lin added 20 points and 11 assists and former Bull Omer Asik had 20 points and 18 rebounds in his first trip back to Chicago since signing with the Rockets in the offseason.

Nate Robinson led the Bulls with 27 points, and Marco Belinelli scored 15. □

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<p><b>Laguna Restaurant*</b></p>	<p>A long-time local favorite, Laguna has re-opened just in time for New Year's. The recent renovation resulted in a sleeker look, but the popular themed buffet menu remains.</p> <p>Adults - \$145.00   Children Ages 6-12 - \$75.00 <i>Includes dinner in Laguna, plus entrance to the New Year's Eve Grand Caribbean Ballroom Countdown Celebration described below.</i></p>
<p><b>Gilligan's Beach Bar &amp; Grill*</b></p>	<p>For a more casual setting, Gilligan's - overlooking the pool, the beach and the Caribbean Sea - offers a delectable menu to match.</p> <p>Adults - \$125.00   Children Ages 6-12 - \$65.00 <i>Includes dinner at Gilligans, plus entrance to the New Year's Eve Grand Caribbean Ballroom Countdown Celebration described below.</i></p>
<p><b>New Year's Eve Grand Caribbean Ballroom</b></p>	<p>This party only package includes entrance to the Countdown Celebration, live entertainment and dancing, premium open bar and snacks from 10:00 pm to 1:30 am, champagne toast at midnight and party favors.</p> <p>Adults - \$100.00   Children Ages 6-12 - \$55.00</p>



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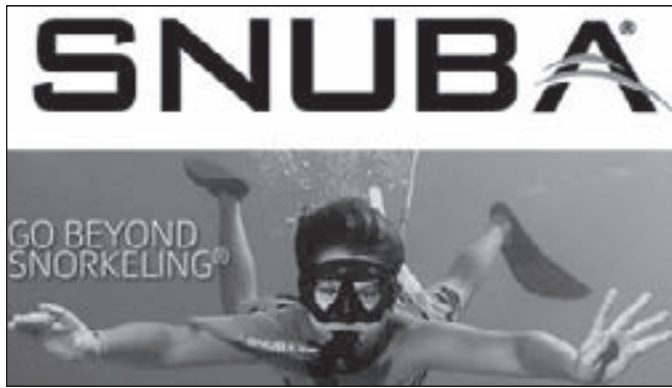
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## Murray no longer feeling under pressure to win

**ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates (AP)** — Andy Murray is feeling less pressure after winning his first Grand Slam title and credits coach Ivan Lendl with having made the difference at the U.S. Open.

The third-ranked Briton ensured 2012 was the best year of his career by adding the title at Flushing Meadows to his gold medal from the London Olympics. As a result, he will enter the Australian Open next month with a different mindset.

"In the last three, four or five years there has been significant pressure in my mind, and now I feel more relaxed and relieved after winning the U.S. Open," Murray said Wednesday. "So, I think from my side, I hope to take the pressure off myself and be able to play a little bit more relaxed — and I hope to repeat my Grand Slam win."

"I don't know how I will feel going into the first round of Australian Open, so it will be a new feeling for me and I just have to deal with it."

Murray was speaking at a news conference to pro-

mote a winner-takes-all \$250,000 exhibition tournament in Abu Dhabi that will serve as part of his preparations for the Australian Open, which runs from Jan. 14-27.

Murray hired Lendl on last New Year's Eve, and is full of the praise for the changes the eight-time Grand Slam champion has helped him make in his game.

"He helped with a lot of small things; you know, technical things, small mental and psychological things and small physical things as well as tactical things," Murray said. "A lot of those small things add up to five to 10 percent to my game, and that was what I needed to find to make it past the last hurdle and win one of the major tournaments."

"I have enjoyed working with him a lot. It is turning out well, so I hope it continues." Having lost in the final at Wimbledon this year, Murray's plans now are to go one better at his home major tournament and become the top-ranked player in the world — but



In this Nov. 11, 2012 file photo, Andy Murray of Britain plays a return to Roger Federer of Switzerland during their ATP World Tennis Final semi final singles match in London. Associated Press

he doesn't plan on playing more events to achieve the second of those goals.

"Every year when Wimbledon comes around I'm desperate to win and do well. It's an incredibly tough event and a lot of pressure during that time of the year," he said. "The No. 1 ranking is what every player wants to get. I can improve my ranking just

playing like I have done last season and the rest of the tour. I don't want to add

extra tournaments and mess up my schedule to try to reach No. 1."



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## Study finds modest declines in obesity among poor children

**SABRINA TAVERNISE**  
© 2012 New York Times

A new national study has found modest declines in obesity among 2- to 4-year-olds from poor families, a dip that researchers say may indicate that the obesity epidemic has passed its peak among this group. The study, by researchers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, drew on the height and weight measurements of 27 million children who were part of the federal Women, Infants and Children program, which provides food subsidies to low-income mothers and their children up to age 5. The study was based on data from 30 states and the District of Columbia and covered the years from

1998 to 2010. The share of children who were obese declined to 14.9 percent in 2010, down from 15.2 percent in 2003, after rising between 1998 and 2003. Extreme obesity also declined, dropping to 2.07 percent in 2010 from 2.22 percent in 2003. The study was published Tuesday in The Journal of the American Medical Association. "The declines we're presenting here are pretty modest, but it is a change in direction," said Heidi M. Blanck, one of the study's authors and the acting director of the Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity at the disease centers. The findings were another sign that one of the nation's seemingly intractable

health problems may be reversing course, at least among children. Single interventions like school exercise programs have not

sures has a chance of success. The new study was one of the first to document a national decline in obe-

the decline, but Blanck offered hypotheses. Breast-feeding, which often leads to healthier weight gain for young children, has increased since 2000. The percentage of 6-month-olds still being breast-fed increased to 47.7 percent among children born in 2009, up from 34.2 percent among children born in 2000. Breast-feeding of infants from low-income families has risen over the years. In 1980, only 28 percent of infants from those families had ever been breast-fed, compared with 66 percent in 2011. Blanck also pointed to changes in the environment, like those documented in a report about food and marketing practices released by the Federal Trade Commission on Friday. □



**The findings of recent studies indicate that one of the nation's seemingly intractable health problems, obesity, may be reversing course, at least among lower income children.**  
(Handout Photo)

worked, and public health experts now say that only a broad set of policy mea-

sity among young children from low-income families. It is unclear what drove

## Coronary disease falls in US military

**ANAHAD O'CONNOR**  
© 2012 New York Times

A new study shows that the rate of coronary artery disease among U.S. service members has declined sharply in the past half century, falling to roughly 1 in 10 military personnel today from about 8 in 10 during the Korean War. The findings came as a surprise to some researchers, who expected that the nationwide rise in obesity and Type 2 diabetes, including among young people, might have led to a similar trend in heart disease in the military. But instead it appears that national reductions in other risk factors for heart disease, like hypertension, smoking and high cholesterol, have had a greater effect on cardiovascular health. Some experts had debated whether the steep decline

was real, given that those in today's all-volunteer military are fitter than the general population and, presumably, those who served during the draft era of the Korean War. But most said the trend was hard to dispute. "The changes in prevalence of coronary disease are so great that I can only conclude that most of the differences are likely real," said Dr. Daniel Levy, a cardiologist and director of the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute's Framingham Heart Study, who was not directly involved in the study. "This isn't a subtle difference; it's a vast difference." The authors of the new study, which was published in The Journal of the American Medical Association on Tuesday, drew their findings from autopsies and medical records of nearly

4,000 service members killed in Iraq and Afghanistan from 2001 to 2011. Most of them were men, with an average age of 26. Overall, 8.5 percent had some degree of hardening and narrowing of the coronary arteries, known as coronary atherosclerosis. During the Korean War, pathologists who carried out similar research, groundbreaking at the time, on 300 soldiers killed in combat found that 77 percent had coronary atherosclerosis. Levy said it was easy to connect the dots: The prevalence of coronary artery disease in young people is on the decline. The Korean War study revealed a silent epidemic of coronary artery disease, he said, and now the pendulum is swinging in the other direction as a result of prevention efforts. □



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## Review: Making Facebook a warmer, smaller space

TALI ARBEL

AP Business Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — A woman I haven't spoken to in six years is pregnant with her second son. Another college acquaintance reads the Bible a lot. A high school classmate likes to rant about politics. A college dormmate thinks he works too much.

On Facebook, I'm connected to a lot of people who are not my friends. Over the years, as my Facebook friend list grows, it's made me increasingly uncomfortable that I seem to know so much about people that I don't actually know.

So as the new year approached, I decided to review my Facebook life. I took a four-week break — a "Facebook Fast" — from the world's biggest online social network. The break this fall spanned the presidential campaign and election, Superstorm Sandy, fighting in the Middle East and my college's homecoming weekend — all events I cared about. These were all reasons for me to crave Facebook as a way to check the zeitgeist.

What did I learn? Sure, there are sleazy and annoying aspects to Facebook. It connects us to each other like tabloids connect readers to celebrities, and it compels us to gossip. It often makes us voyeurs accidentally immersed in the intimate lives of people we barely know.

But after eight years on the network, I rely on it for pictures and news of faraway friends and relatives. I can't quit. Like it or not, Facebook is an important part of my life.

Facebook Inc. is in the midst of trying to make its privacy policies more intuitive for users. It has added a little padlock icon at the top right of the website. When you click on it, Facebook walks you through how to change who sees what you post, who can contact you and how to review what others are writing about you.

But if you're trying to curate your Facebook life, there are more steps you need to take. Here are some tips for remaking the network so it's less a tabloid feed of unwanted updates and more a warmer, personal space that better reflects your real-life social circle.

CUT BACK ON TOTAL TIME SPENT I used to keep Facebook open on my work computer, checking in periodically

throughout the day. I relied on the Facebook app on my phone to entertain me whenever I was waiting in line or riding in a taxi. I would also log in at home. It was overkill. I check Facebook less often now. The goal: Read less and write more.

First, I disabled the app on my phone.

I also enabled email notifications for whenever someone sends me a message, tags me in a photo, or posts on my profile or in one of my groups. If someone's trying to get in touch with me, I still want to know and be able to respond. Because I get the notifications, I don't need to keep Facebook open at work or check on it constantly at home.



In this Tuesday, Dec. 13, 2011, file photo, a Facebook User Operations Safety Team worker looks at reviews at Facebook headquarters in Menlo Park, Calif.

Associated Press

Here's how to get those notifications: Click on the wheel icon at the top right corner of Facebook and choose "privacy settings" on the menu that pops up. Then click on "notifications" on the left. □

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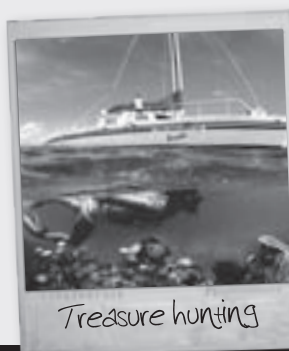


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## Retailers pull stocks lower on weak holidays

C. REXRODE

AP Business Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — For the stock market, this week hasn't been the most wonderful time of the year.

U.S. stocks fell Wednesday for the third trading day in a row. Disappointing holiday sales weighed heavy on retail companies, and the unwelcome "fiscal cliff" package of higher taxes and lower government spending loomed nearer. The Dow Jones industrial average slipped 24.49 points to 13,114.59. The Standard & Poor's 500 index fell 6.83 to 1,419.83 and the Nasdaq composite lost 22.44 to 2,990.16.

Karyn Cavanaugh, market strategist with ING Investment Management in New York, wrote a note to clients Wednesday highlighting the less-than-merry retail sales. "I hope that they're reading this from the mall," she said later, "because retail sales could use a boost." The MasterCard Advisors SpendingPulse report found that sales of

electronics, clothing, jewelry and home goods increased just 0.7 percent in the two months before Christmas compared with the same period last year. That was well below the 3 to 4 percent that analysts had expected and the worst performance since 2008,



Daniel Kryger, left, and Kevin Lodewick Jr., right, follow trading from the floor of the New York Stock Exchange in New York, Wednesday, Dec. 26, 2012. (AP Photo/Kathy Willens)

when spending shrank during the depths of the Great Recession.

Major U.S. retailers including Abercrombie & Fitch, Sears Holdings, Urban Outfitters, Limited Brands, Nike and Gap were all down. Hand-

bag maker Coach, a bellwether of the luxury market, plummeted \$3.39 to \$54.13. It lost nearly 6 percent of its value, more than any other company in the S&P 500.

Right behind it was online retailer Amazon.com, which helps analysts get a read on the entire retail market. It

lost nearly 4 percent, falling \$9.99 to \$248.63.

Plodding retail sales are a concern because consumer spending accounts for roughly 70 percent of the U.S. economy.

When shoppers pull back on

spending, that can take a chunk out of company earnings, which in turn pushes down the stock market.

The retail numbers are also a sign that despite scattered hints of an improving economy, including a report Wednesday about rising home prices, many consumers remain uneasy about their prospects.

"Consumers just aren't confident," said Jeff Sica, president and chief investment officer of SICA Wealth Management in Morristown, New Jersey. "They don't feel a sense of security that they're going to be able to maintain their job or their income or their savings."

Sica pointed out that normally the market rises at this time of year — the so-called Santa Claus rally. Since 1969, stocks have risen an average of 1.6 percent over the last five days of December and the first two of January, according to The Stock Trader's Almanac. □

## US home prices rise for October

C. S. RUGABER

AP Economics Writer

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — US

home prices rose in most major cities in October compared with a year ago, pushed up by rising sales and a decline in the supply of available homes. Higher prices show the housing market is improving even as it moves into the more dormant fall and winter sales period.

The Standard & Poor's/Case-Shiller national home price index released Wednesday increased 4.3 percent in October compared with a year ago. That's the largest year-over-year increase in two and a half years, when a homebuyer tax credit temporarily boosted sales. Prices rose in October from a year ago in 18 of 20 cities. Phoenix led all cities with a 21.7 percent gain, followed Detroit, where prices increased 10 percent. Prices declined in Chicago and New York. □

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## Stores look to week after Christmas for sales

**CANDICE CHOI**  
**MAE ANDERSON**  
**AP Retail Writers**

Bargain-hungry Americans will need to go on a post-Christmas spending binge to salvage this holiday shopping season.

Despite the huge discounts and other incentives that stores offered leading up to Christmas, U.S. holiday sales so far this year have been the weakest since 2008, when the nation was in a deep recession.

So stores now are depending on the days after Christmas to make up lost ground: The final week of December can account for about 15 percent of the month's sales, and the day after Christmas is typically one of the biggest shopping days of the year.

Stores, which don't typically talk about their plans for sales and other promotions during the season, are known for offering discounts of up to 70 percent in the days after Christmas. This year, they're hoping to lure more bargain hunters who held off on shopping because they wanted to get the best deals of the season.

Still, a powerful winter storm, which pounded the nation's midsection on Wednesday and is heading toward the Northeast, could hurt post-Christmas shopping. The storm is bringing high winds and heavy snow that disrupted holiday travel, knocked out power to thousands of homes and were blamed in at least six deaths.

The Macy's location in Herald Square in New York was bustling with shoppers on Wednesday. There were a

variety of deals throughout the store: candy dispensers for 70 percent off, various men's clothing items for "buy one get one free," belts for 50 percent off, a

buying until the final days before Christmas, knowing that the deals would get better as stores got more desperate. He said he was expecting discounts of at



**U.S. holiday retail sales this year are the weakest since 2008, after a shopping season disrupted by storms and rising uncertainty among consumers. A report out Tuesday that tracks spending, called MasterCard Advisors SpendingPulse, says holiday sales increased 0.7 percent. Analysts had expected sales to grow 3 to 4 percent.** (AP Photo/Chris Carlson)

bin of ties for \$9.99.

Ulises Guzman, 30, a social worker, was shopping in the store. He said he held off

least 50 percent.

The strategy worked. He saw a coat he wanted at Banana Republic for \$200

in the days before Christmas but decided to hold off on making a purchase; on Wednesday, he got it for \$80. "I'm not looking at anything that's original price," he said. Lenox Square Mall in Atlanta was also crowded by midday on Wednesday. Laschonda Pitluck, an 18-year-old student, had held off on shopping until after Christmas because she wanted big deals. Last year she spent over \$100 on gifts but this year she's keeping it under \$50.

Pitluck said she found items for 50 percent off, including a hoodie and jeans for herself at American Eagle and a shirt at Urban Outfitters. She said she would have bought the clothes if they hadn't been 50 percent off. "I wasn't looking for deals before Christmas, I waited until after," she said. She bought boxers for her boyfriend, and was looking for a hat but couldn't find one. Holiday sales are a crucial

indicator of the economy's strength. November and December account for up to 40 percent of annual revenue for many retailers. So far, sales of electronics, clothing, jewelry and home goods in the two months before Christmas increased 0.7 percent compared with last year, according to the MasterCard Advisors SpendingPulse report. That was the weakest holiday performance since 2008 when sales dropped sharply. Kathy Grannis, a spokeswoman at The National Retail Federation, the nation's largest retail trade group, said Wednesday the trade group is sticking to its forecast for sales in the November and December period to be up 4.1 percent to \$586.1 billion this year. That's more than a percentage point lower than the growth in each of the past two years, and the smallest increase since 2009 when sales were up just 0.3 percent. □

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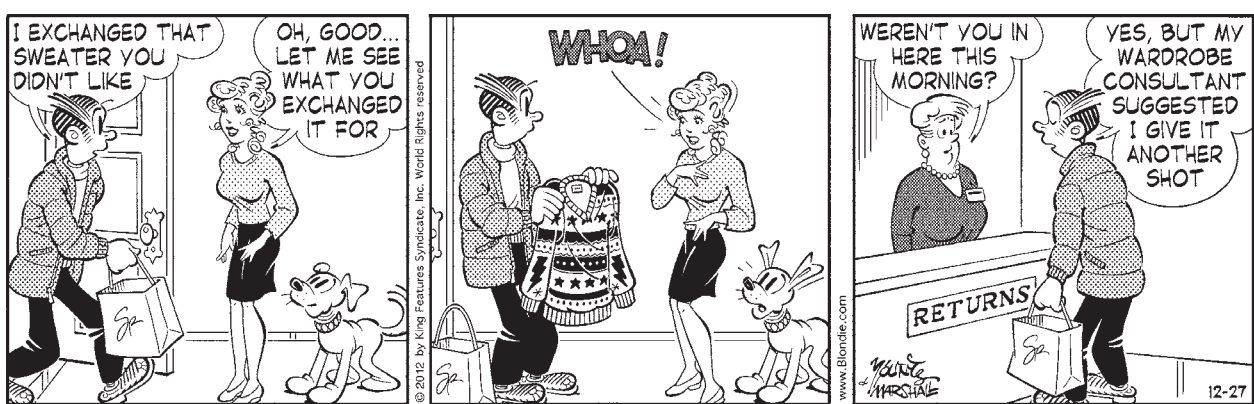
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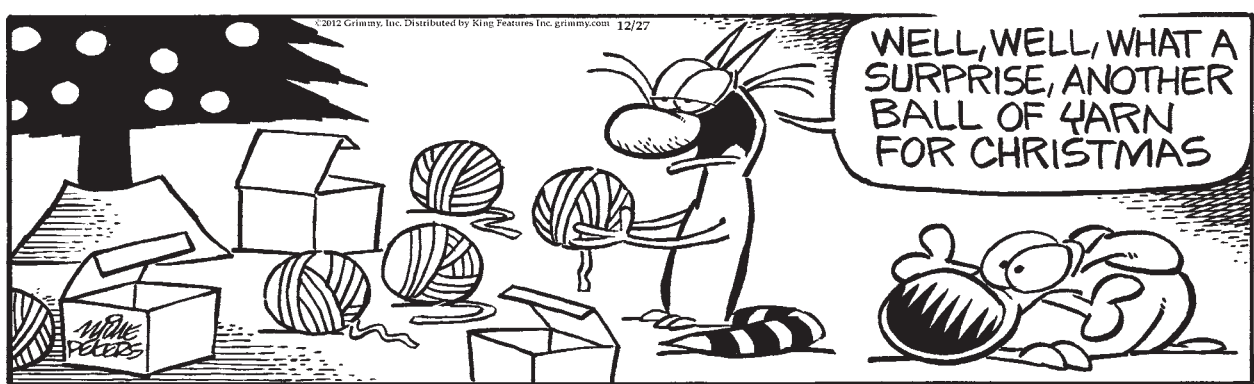
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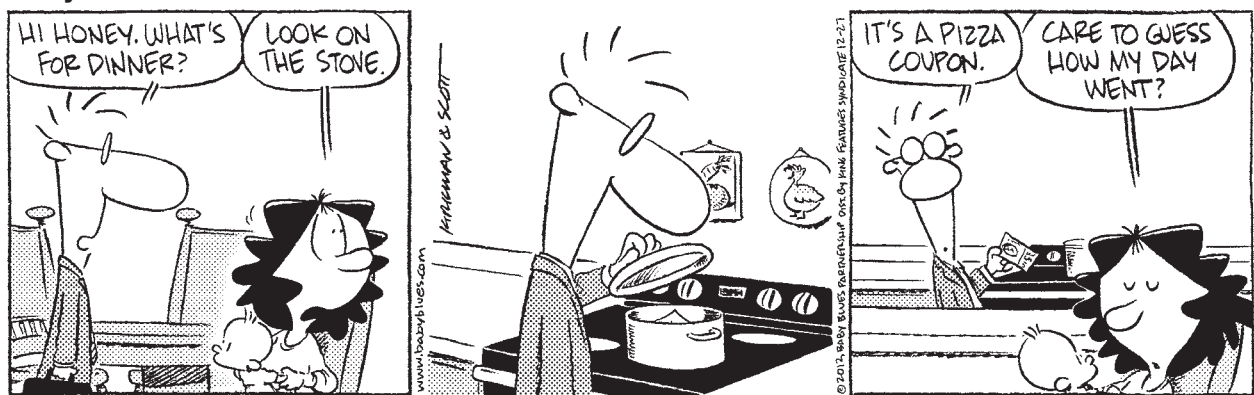
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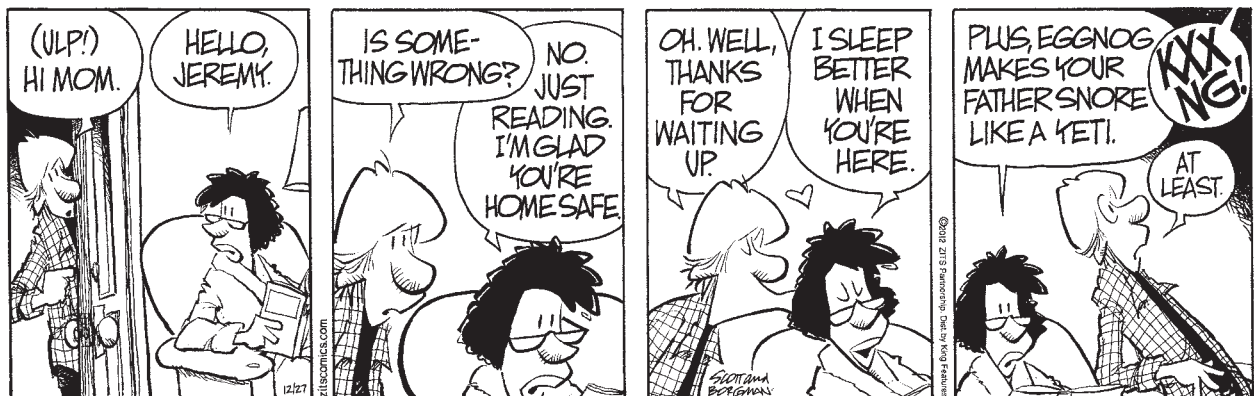
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Baby Blues



Zits



Conceptis Sudoku

6	4	9						1
2					9			8
8				4	2			
							1	2
		8					5	
	6	1						
			4	6				1
7			8					4
	3						8	9
							6	

Difficulty Level ★★

12/27

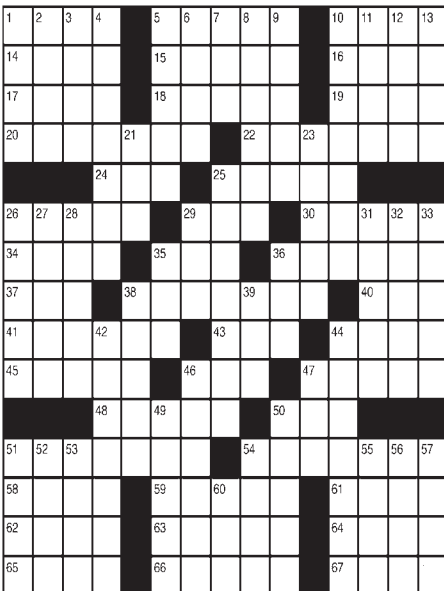
Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

Yesterday's puzzle answer

6	5	4	1	7	3	2	9	8
1	3	9	2	8	5	7	6	4
8	7	2	9	4	6	3	5	1
9	4	3	7	6	8	1	2	5
7	2	8	5	9	1	6	4	3
5	6	1	3	2	4	9	8	7
2	1	7	8	5	9	4	3	6
4	9	5	6	3	7	8	1	2
3	8	6	4	1	2	5	7	9

ACROSS

- 1 Animal pen
- 5 Exhibits
- 10 Pillar
- 14 Garden in Genesis
- 15 Chaplain's title, perhaps
- 16 Out of town
- 17 "Phooey!"
- 18 New Delhi's nation
- 19 Harness strap
- 20 Comes forth
- 22 Old sewing machine pedal
- 24 Lubricate
- 25 Kids around
- 26 Uneasy feeling
- 29 Mongrel
- 30 Traveler's stop
- 34 Pegs for Els
- 35 Beanie or beret
- 36 Play over again in one's mind
- 37 "Lost You"; Elvis song
- 38 Bullet diameter
- 40 Plead
- 41 Interior of two
- 43 Turner or Kennedy
- 44 Prefix for van or skirt
- 45 Tire ridge pattern
- 46 Shameful grade
- 47 Banquet
- 48 Not as wild
- 50 \_\_ culpa
- 51 Redoes an electrical job
- 54 Food fish
- 58 \_\_-present; constant
- 59 Nurse's helpers
- 61 Eye flirtatiously
- 62 African river
- 63 "Trick or \_\_!"
- 64 Coat or shawl
- 65 Early car manufacturer
- 66 Transmits
- 67 Aug.'s follower



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews

12/27/12

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

ABASH	OLDS	ABLE
MALTA	POEM	CLAN
OLDER	INCA	CARD
SLAPPING	CRINGE	
PINE	SKIDDED	
PRIEST	AISLE	
AID	TENSE	ENSUE
SOLD	RANGE	TANS
STEED	VEERS	RIP
LASER	RARITY	
ADMIRAL	HOLE	
ERECTS	PERVADED	
SARA	HORA	ASIDE
OMIT	ABEL	GORGE
PATE	YIPS	ENTER

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12/27/12

DOWN

- 1 Relinquish
- 2 Actor \_\_ West
- 3 Autry or Barry
- 4 Grab the whole attention of
- 5 Sales pitch
- 6 \_\_ Christian Andersen
- 7 Peculiar
- 8 Author
- 9 Chars
- 10 Umbrella
- 11 Was indebted
- 12 Jib, for one
- 13 Actress Daly
- 21 " \_\_ Along, Little Dogies"
- 23 Old anesthetic
- 25 Largest planet
- 26 Leaning
- 27 At no time
- 28 Honking birds
- 29 Baseball's \_\_ Ripken, Jr.
- 31 Leg bone
- 32 \_\_ out; makes level
- 33 Permitted, for short
- 35 Taurus or Pries
- 36 \_\_ as a beet
- 38 Fragrant wood
- 39 Stinging insect
- 42 Contemptuous writings
- 44 Grasslands
- 46 Want
- 47 Nourished
- 49 Veal & venison
- 50 Ship poles
- 51 City in Nevada
- 52 Wicked
- 53 Unite by fusing
- 54 Noggin
- 55 Monster
- 56 Applaud
- 57 Held on to
- 60 Comfy room



# Novelty soda shop rebuked over stocking candy smokes

**Associated Press**  
**ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP)** — Owners of an old-school soda shop in St. Paul, Minn., are being warned to kick the habit and stop stocking novelty candy cigarettes. City inspectors threatened a misdemeanor citation and \$500 fine if Lynden's soda fountain is caught selling the fake smokes again. The Star Tribune reported Wednesday that the offering violated an ordinance barring the sale of candy smokes and cartoon char-

acter lighters. A city spokesman says the warning came after inspectors received and looked into a complaint about the presence of the tobacco-themed products. The ordinance was enacted to discourage youngsters from picking up a real smoking habit. Shop owner Tobi Lynden says the white candy sticks with the red tips were her best-selling candy item but she pulled them to avoid running afoul of the ordinance. □

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# U.S. West Coast ready for more Japan tsunami debris

ALICIA CHANG

AP Science Writer

**LOS ANGELES (AP)** — Volunteers who patrol California beaches for plastic, cigarette butts and other litter will be on the lookout this winter for debris from last year's monstrous tsunami off Japan's coast. The March 2011 disaster washed about 5 million tons of debris into the sea. Most sank, leaving an estimated 1 1/2 million tons afloat.

No one knows how much debris — strewn across an area three times the size of the United States — is still adrift.

Last week, the U.S. Coast Guard spotted a massive dock that possibly came from Japan on a wilderness beach in Washington state.

The West Coast is bracing for more sightings in the coming months as seasonal winds and coastal currents tend to drive marine wreckage ashore.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration recently received a \$5 million donation from Japan to track and remove tsunami debris.

Debris from Asia routinely floats to the U.S. It's extremely difficult to link something back to the Japanese tsunami without a serial number, phone



ing the world's coastlines. "There's a bit of tsunami debris fever. It's like an Easter egg hunt," said Plybon, who has been cleaning up the Oregon coast for over a decade. "People used to walk past debris. Now they want to be engaged."

Tsunami waves swamped a Japanese nuclear power plant and swept debris into the ocean, but health experts have said debris arriving on the West Coast is unlikely to be radioactive after having crossed thousands of miles of ocean. The debris field, which once could be spotted from satellite and aerial photos, has dispersed.

More than 18,000 residents were killed or went missing.

Volunteer Julie Walters has combed Mussel Rock Beach south of San Francisco for wreckage, but all she has found so far are wave-battered boat parts and lumber of unknown origin.

If she did find an object with a direct link, "I would find it quite intriguing that it made this incredible journey across the Pacific," said Walters, a volunteer with the Pacifica Beach Coalition.

"It would also sadden me to think of the human tragedy." □

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In this July 2012 file photo provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), buoys, foam and other debris are strewn about a beach on Kayak Island, Alaska.

**Associated Press**

number or other marker. Of the more than 1,400 tsunami debris sightings reported to NOAA, the agency only traced 17 pieces back to the event, including small fishing boats, soccer balls, a dock and a shipping container hous-

ing a Harley-Davidson motorcycle with Japanese license plates.

Charlie Plybon, Oregon's regional manager at the Surfrider Foundation, said the tsunami has raised beachgoers' awareness about marine debris plau-

[illegible]



## 2 actors we loved knowing, who seemed to know us

**FRAZIER MOORE**  
**AP Television Writer**

**NEW YORK (AP)** — What a couple of mugs, sporting less-than-perfect physiques in the bargain.

But was there anything lovelier than Jack Klugman or Charles Durning doing what they did for an audience?

Rumpled Klugman exploding at his prissy flat-mate Tony Randall in the long-running TV comedy "The Odd Couple." Portly Durning hoofing, fleet of foot, and singing how "Ewww-ww, I love to do a little side-step" in the film "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas." Each was a luminous display of the extraordinary possibilities of the ordinary. Klugman and Durning (both of whom died Monday, Klugman at 90 in Los Angeles, Durning at 89 in New York) spent storied careers building catalogues of roles that classed them indisputably as "character actors."

Even with a certain "always-a-bridesmaid-never-a-bride" taint attached to it, the term "character actor" commands respect and affection among audiences, even audience members who may not quite realize their level of investment in such artistry. Traditional stardom — "leading man" status — is conferred on the actors who embody a fantasy, an ideal. They are famously out of reach of a ticket holder or a couch potato, other than through sitting back and watching from afar. Dreams are a powerful engine of Hollywood, and these actors — whether Clark Gable or Will Smith — are thrilling dream agents. But there's another breed of actor — the group in which Klugman and Durning reign supreme — who sustains us in more comfortable ways. If a star like Brad Pitt stirs the frisson of eternal longing in the audience (oh, to be with him,

or be him!), a character actor serves another need: cinematic kinship.

Klugman solving crimes as a lab geek on his series "Quincy, M.E.," or Durning as a stressed-out cop ("Dog Day Afternoon") or a romantic who's smitten with Dustin Hoffman in drag ("Tootsie") — these are actors we identify with, instantly and eagerly. Nothing seems to stand between us and what they do. They, with their just-coping-with-life heroics, show us who we are, or could be if we try a little harder (or warn us of the jam that might befall us if we don't). They are our proxies. They never go out of style. They never lose their appeal. They are never put away because their looks have faded or their waistline thickened. We stick with them, just as they stick with us. (Durning was working into his late 80s in a recurring role as the irascible father of Denis Leary's firefighter protagon-



This combination of Associated Press file photos shows, Jack Klugman, left, speaking at the 62nd Annual Tony Awards in New York on June 15, 2008 and Charles Durning, right, during the 14th Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards in Los Angeles. Associated Press

nist on the drama "Rescue Me"). In this way, too, they resemble everybody we truly love: We love them in every phase of their lives. Like most of us, the character actor seldom if ever gets the girl or saves the world. They aren't flashy. But with their own special magnetism, they remind us, in role after role, that everyday

people are special, too. Sure, we love being dazzled by Hollywood glamour. We love stars who make us weak in the knees. But an actor like Klugman or Durning bears a message that applies far beyond the realm of Tinseltown, a message worth remembering with every performance: Beauty is, as beauty does. □

## Aruhiba Cigars, Aruba's only hand rolled cigars!

*t's a matter of prestige and quality...*



**ORANJESTAD-** Benjamin Petrocchi, a true native Aruban started the newest export product of Aruba, locally produced hand rolled cigars called "Aruhiba". These cigars are produced and cultivated in Aruba. Petrocchi always had a interest in the cigar business and has also sold Premium Cuban Cigars, and now he is growing his own tobacco crops. After many attempts and trips to Santo Domingo and Cuba, he started his own production and cultivation of Aruhiba Cigars in Aruba. The whole process took him 10 years to perfect. Petrocchi dedication to the cigars is important for the moulding and process of making a

perfect cigar which takes a long time. Their handmade cigar box is specially designed with their "Aruhiba" logo. Petrocchi considers Aruhiba as a promotion for Aruba through its fine cigars. The company sells Aruhiba to the international markets as well. Visit their retail store located in front of the Historic Dutch Windmill in front of the Westin Resort, with any purchase of \$20 and up you receive a free "Aruhiba" cigar or ask for their gift box of 5 cigars get 1 FREE for only \$37. They open from Monday to Saturday from 9 am till 6:30 pm and on Sundays from 9 am to 1 pm. Aruhiba cigars are now available at the gift stores in your resort

and at well-known cigar stores. For their complete selection and attractive by the box prices visit their retail store. Tours are also available at their Tobacco farm where their cigars are grown and rolled.

For a group or private tour, call 586 0347 - 593 6177 or send them an email at [aruhibacigars@gmail.com](mailto:aruhibacigars@gmail.com)





# Ticket rush: Film fans hand Hollywood record cash

**DAVID GERMAIN**  
AP Movie Writer

**LOS ANGELES (AP)** — The big deal for Hollywood is not the record \$10.8 billion that studios took in domestically in 2012. It's the fact that the number of tickets sold went up for the first time in three years.

Thanks to inflation, revenue generally rises in Hollywood as admission prices climb each year. The real story is told in tickets, whose sales have been on a general decline for a decade, bottoming out in 2011 at 1.29 billion, their lowest level since 1995.

The industry rebounded this year, with ticket sales projected to rise 5.6 percent to 1.36 billion by Dec. 31, according to box-office tracker Hollywood.com. That's still well below the modern peak of 1.6 billion tickets sold in 2002, but in an age of cozy home theater setups and endless entertainment gadgets, studio executives consider it a triumph that they were able to put more butts in cinema seats this year than last.

"It is a victory, ultimately," said Don Harris, head of distribution at Paramount Pictures. "If we deliver the product as an industry that people want, they will want to get out there. Even though you can sit at home and watch something on your large screen in high-def, people want to get out."

Domestic revenue should finish up nearly 6 percent from 2011's \$10.2 billion and top Hollywood's previous high of \$10.6 billion set in 2009.

The year was led by a pair of superhero sagas, Disney's "The Avengers" with \$623 million domestically and \$1.5 billion worldwide and the Warner Bros. Batman finale "The Dark Knight Rises" with \$448 million domestically and \$1.1 billion worldwide. Sony's James Bond adventure "Skyfall" is closing in on the \$1 billion mark globally, and the list of action and family-film blockbusters includes "The Hunger Games," "The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn



In this file photo of a publicity film image released by Disney, Iron Man, portrayed by Robert Downey Jr., left, and Captain America, portrayed by Chris Evans, are shown in a scene from "The Avengers."

Associated Press

— Part Two," "Ice Age: Continental Drift," "Madagascar 3: Europe's Most Wanted," "The Amazing Spider-Man" and "Brave." Before television, movies were the biggest thing going, with ticket sales estimated as high as 4 billion a year domestically in the 1930s and '40s.

Movie-going eroded steadily through the 1970s as people stayed home with their small screens. The rise of videotape in the 1980s further cut into business, followed by DVDs in the '90s and big, cheap flat-screen TVs in recent years. Today's video games, mobile phones and other portable devices also offer easy options to tramping out to a movie theater. It's all been a continual drain on cinema business, and cynics repeatedly predict the eventual demise of movie theaters. Yet Hollywood fights back with new technology of its own, from digital 3-D to booming surround-sound to the clarity of images projected at high-frame rates, which is being tested now with "The Lord of the Rings" prelude "The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey," shown in select theaters at 48 frames a second, double the standard speed.

For all of the annoyances of theaters — parking, pricy

concessions, sitting next to strangers texting on their iPhones — cinemas still offer the biggest and best way to see a movie.

"Every home has a kitchen, but you can't get into a good restaurant on Saturday night," said Dan Fellman, head of distribution for Warner Bros. "People want to escape. That's the nature of society. The adult population just is not going to sit home seven days a week, even though they have technology in their home that's certainly an improvement over what it was 10 years ago. People want to get out of the house, and no matter what they throw in the face of theatrical exhibition, it continues to perform at a strong level."

Even real-life violence at the movie theater didn't turn audiences away. Some moviegoers thought twice about heading to the cinema after a gunman killed 12 people and injured 58 at a screening of "The Dark Knight Rises" in Colorado last summer, but if there was any lull in attendance, it was slight and temporary. Ticket sales went on a tear for most of the fall.

While domestic revenues inch upward most years largely because of inflation, the real growth ar-

eas have been overseas, where more and more fans are eager for the next Hollywood blockbuster.

Rentrak, which compiles international box office data, expects 2012's foreign gross to be about \$23 billion, 3 percent higher than in 2011. No data was yet available on the number of tickets sold overseas this past year.

International business generally used to account for

less than half of a studio film's overall receipts. Films now often do two or even three times as much business overseas as they do domestically. Some movies that were duds with U.S. audiences, such as "BattleShip" and "John Carter," can wind up being \$200 million hits with overseas crowds.

Whether finishing a good year or a bad one, Hollywood executives always look ahead to better days, insisting that the next crop of blockbusters will be bigger than ever. The same goes this time as studio bosses hype their 2013 lineup, which includes the latest "Iron Man," "Star Trek," "Hunger Games" and "Thor" installments, the Superman tale "Man of Steel" and the second chapter in "The Hobbit" trilogy.

Twelve months from now, they hope to be talking about another revenue record topping this year's \$10.8 billion.

"I've been saying we're going to hit that \$11 billion level for about three years now," said Paul Dergarabedian, a box-office analyst for Hollywood.com.

"Next year I think is the year we actually do it." □

## Ben Affleck says he won't run for U.S. Senate



**Ben Affleck, actor and founder of the Eastern Congo Initiative, takes notes during testimony during the House Armed Services Committee hearing on the evolving security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on Capitol Hill in Washington, Wednesday, Dec. 19, 2012.**

Associated Press

**BOSTON (AP)** — Ben Affleck is taking his name off the list of possible candidates for John Kerry's seat in the U.S. Senate, which would be open if the Democratic senator from Massachusetts is confirmed as secretary of state.

Affleck says in a Monday posting on his Facebook page that while he loves the political process, he will not be running for public office.

Speculation about the Massachusetts native rose slightly when he did not completely rule out a Senate bid during an appearance on CBS on Sunday.

In his Facebook posting, Affleck says he would continue working with the Eastern Congo Initiative.



# When Prophecy Fails



**PAUL KRUGMAN**  
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Back in the 1950s three social psychologists joined a cult that was predicting the imminent end of the world. Their purpose was to observe the cultists' response when the world did not, in fact, end on schedule. What they discovered, and described in their classic book, "When Prophecy Fails," is that the irrefutable failure of a prophecy does not cause true believers – people who have committed themselves to a belief both emotionally and by their life choices – to reconsider. On the contrary, they become even more fervent, and proselytize even harder.

This insight seems highly relevant as 2012 draws to a close. After all, a lot of people came to believe that we were on the brink of catastrophe – and these views were given extraordinary reach by the mass media. As it turned out, of course, the predicted catastrophe failed to materialize. But we can be sure that the cultists won't admit to having been wrong. No, the people who told us that a fiscal crisis was imminent will just keep at it, more convinced than ever. Oh, wait a second – did you think I was talking about the Mayan calendar thing?

Seriously, at every stage of our ongoing economic crisis – and in particular, every time anyone has suggested actually trying to do something about mass unemployment – a chorus of voices has warned that unless we bring down budget deficits now now now, financial markets will turn on America, driving interest rates sky-high. And these prophecies of doom have had a powerful effect on our economic discourse. Thus, back in May 2009 the Wall Street Journal editorial page seized on an uptick in long-term interest rates to declare that the "bond vigilantes," the "disciplinary forces of U.S. policymakers," had arrived, and would push rates inexorably higher if big budget deficits continued. As it happened, rates soon went back down. But that didn't stop The Journal's news section from rolling out the same story the next time rates rose: "Debt fears send rates up," blared a headline in March 2010; the debt continued to grow, but the rates went down again.

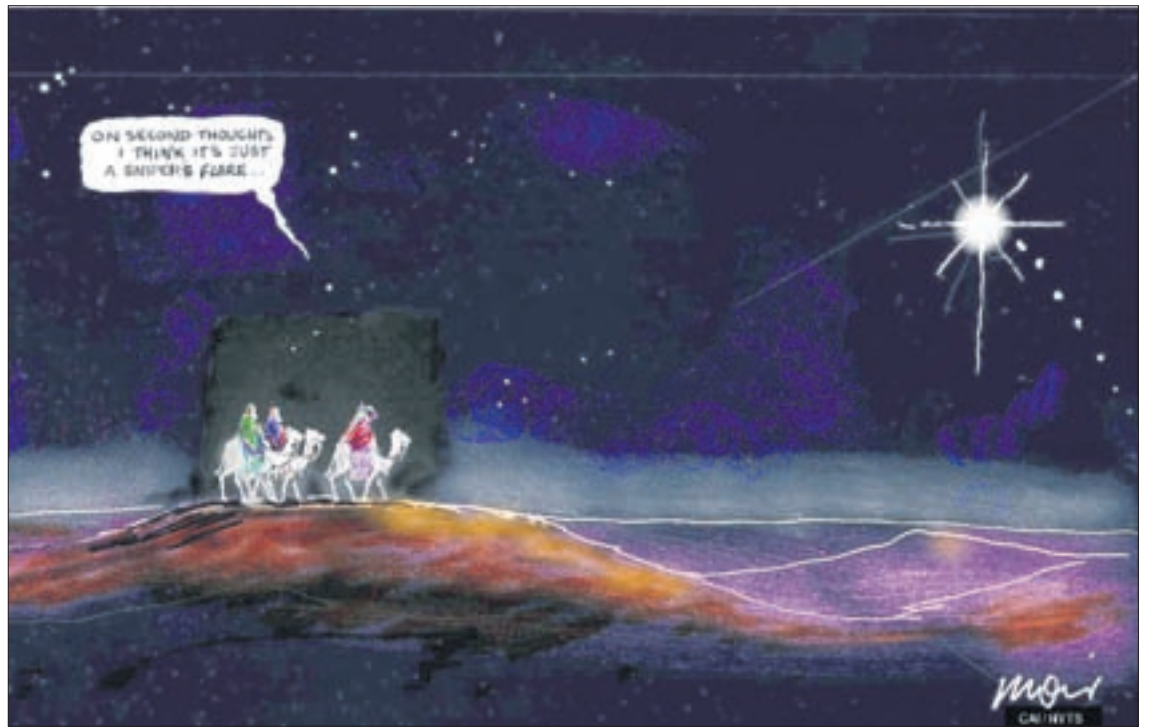
At this point the yield on the benchmark 10-year bond is less than half what it was

when that 2009 editorial was published. But don't expect any rethinking on The Journal's part.

Now, you could say that The Journal's editors didn't give a specific date for the fiscal apocalypse, although I doubt that any of their readers imagined that they were talking about an event at least three years and seven months in the future. In any case, some of the most prominent deficit scolds have indeed been willing to talk about dates, or at least time horizons. In early 2011 Erskine Bowles confidently declared that we would face a fiscal crisis within around two years unless something like the Bowles-Simpson deficit plan was enacted, and Alan Simpson chimed in to say that it would be less than two years. I guess he has about 10 weeks left. But again, don't expect either Simpson or Bowles to admit that there might have been something fundamentally wrong with their analysis. No, very few of the prophets of fiscal doom have acknowledged the failure of their prophecies to come true so far. And those who have admitted surprise seem more annoyed than chastened. For example, back in 2010 Alan Greenspan – who is, for some reason, still treated as an authority figure – conceded that despite large budget deficits, "inflation and long-term interest rates, the typical symptoms of fiscal excess, have remained remarkably subdued." But he went on to declare, "This is regrettable, because it is fostering a sense of complacency." How dare reality not validate my fears!

Regular readers know that I and other economists argued from the beginning that these dire warnings of fiscal catastrophe were all wrong, that budget deficits won't cause soaring interest rates as long as the economy is depressed – and that the biggest risk to the economy is that we might try to slash the deficit too soon. And surely that point of view has been strongly validated by events. The key thing we need to understand, however, is that the prophets of fiscal disaster, no matter how respectable they may seem, are at this point effectively members of a doomsday cult. They are emotionally and professionally committed to the belief that fiscal crisis lurks just around the corner, and they will hold to their belief no matter how many corners we turn without encountering that crisis.

So we cannot and will not persuade these people to reconsider their views in the light of the evidence. All we can do is stop paying attention. It's going to be difficult, because many members of the deficit cult seem highly respectable. But they've been hugely, absurdly wrong for years on end, and it's time to stop taking them seriously. □



# These Wretched Vessels Of Ours



**FRANK BRUNI**  
© 2012 New York Times

I asked a friend of mine what she wanted for Christmas. "Botox," she said, joking, but not entirely. She hates the deepening creases in her forehead, the age in her face. She wishes she looked younger, prettier and, of course, thinner. She has vowed to exercise more and eat healthier in the New Year. Haven't we all?

It sometimes seems to me that one-third of the conversations I have with the people around me – most of us privileged and to varying degrees pampered – concern physical complaints: the love handles that won't be whittled, the hairline in retreat, the knees crying foul over decades of running, the crow's-feet heralding the end of our salad days and the beginning of – what? Our wilting? If we don't feel bad about our necks, we feel bad about plenty else.

And even when I was younger, I heard or participated in no shortage of similar talks. From the time we become fully aware of our bodies, so many of us are at ceaseless war with them.

We obsess over their imperfections. We will them into different contours and hues. And we line the coffers of beauty purveyors, as if attaining some carnal ideal could confer con-

tentment.

I think about this whenever I reflect on one of my favorite movies from 2012. I saw it about three months ago, at a screening before its theatrical release, and it has stayed with me since, not so much for its artistic worth – though it's amply worthy – as for its spiritual merit.

That probably makes it sound sappy, which it is, just a bit. It's also a chamber piece, not a symphony, and it's performed in a minor key.

But this movie, "The Sessions," has as much to say about the human experience as grander, more lavishly praised and more widely discussed productions like "Lincoln" and "Zero Dark Thirty." And part of what it says is that our bodies are not ourselves. That we can be dealt a set of imperfections – of crushingly severe limitations, in fact – and nonetheless transcend them, with some help and some luck and, above all, some grit. That we can look as far beyond the flesh that we've inherited as we resolve to, and that fulfillment is a mindset, at least in many cases and to some extent.

"The Sessions" tells the real-life story of Mark O'Brien, a writer who was afflicted with polio in his childhood and, as a result, was mostly paralyzed from the neck down. He was tiny, too: just 4-foot-7 as a fully grown man, and about 60 pounds. He spent his nights in an iron lung, which helped him breathe. When he ventured out during the day, he did so either in a specialized wheelchair or on a kind of gurney. There were indeed places he couldn't go and things he couldn't do.

But at some point he decided that one thing he would do was have sex.

He advertised for a girlfriend on his Web page, wryly noting, "There will be no walks on the beach." Ultimately, he visited a sex surrogate.

"The Sessions" focuses on that interlude and relationship, rendered so unblinkingly that the movie is all too easy to see only as a parable of sexual awakening and an account of an unconventional liaison.

What "The Sessions" illuminates is bigger than that. It shows an individual insisting on experiences and pleasures outside the limits of what, because of his physical form, he's supposed to envision for himself and others envision for him.

For example, O'Brien, who died in 1999 at the age of 49, couldn't type or write long-hand, but through dictation and the movement of a stick with his mouth he put word to paper and fashioned a career as a journalist and poet. And, if the movie is credible, he found joy.

There are countless ways for our bodies to betray us and, in the more charmed precincts of the world, a woeful lack of perspective in assessing which of those ways are consequential and which merely warrant minor annoyance, if that. There's also a widespread failure to grasp the happiness-dooming futility of endless yearnings for transformations beyond what diet and exercise are rightly prescribed for and can reasonably accomplish.

Beyond what's healthy and sensible and proportional.

We're so much more than these wretched vessels that we sprint or swagger or lurch or limp around in, some of them sturdy, some of them not, some of them objects of ardor, some of them magnets for pity.

We should make peace with them and remain conscious of that, especially at this particular hinge of the calendar, when we compose a litany of promises about the better selves ahead, foolishly defining those selves in terms of what's measurable from the outside, instead of what glimmers within. □



# Before the clock strikes 12, save time to indulge

DAVID TANIS

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The holidays present a number of opportunities to splurge, and New Year's Eve is the ultimate night for it. Although it may seem a cliché, the classic combination of blini and caviar is the perfect example – indulgent, elegant and delectable to the extreme. If you are hosting a small crowd for drinks (preferably Champagne or vodka with these), it's all you need to serve, although it also can be a sit-down first course. Preparation is simple: The blini are topped with a dab of creme fraiche, a spoonful of caviar and a drizzle of butter.

Blini is the Russian word for pancake (though sometimes called bliny), and it's one blin, two blini, in case you were wondering about the plural form. But it is al-

powder, but the traditional way is to make a yeast-raised batter. Just before cooking, the batter is enriched with egg yolks and lightened with stiff-beaten egg whites, which gives the pancakes a lovely, slightly fluffy texture. Cook them in batches and keep them warm in a low oven, or serve them as I do, straight from the griddle.

I'm afraid that caviar, that infamous lightly salted sturgeon roe, is a bit of a dirty word these days, and not necessarily because it has long been thought of as a snack for the filthy rich. Overfishing has reduced much of the world's wild sturgeon stocks to the verge of extinction, and not just in the Baltic and Black seas, but in North America as well. There are now strict regulations in place, however, and im-



**A dish prepared with blini topped with a dab of creme fraiche, a spoonful of caviar and a drizzle of butter. The classic combination of blini and caviar is the perfect example of a way to welcome 2013.**  
(Fred R. Conrad/The New York Times)

Israel, and well regarded by the finest caviar houses. So that "Siberian" caviar? More like Sarasota, Fla. But even farmed caviar

consider having the whole group chip in.

There are other choices if you don't want to use sturgeon caviar, whatever your reason. Salmon caviar or trout roe, both relatively inexpensive, make a delicious alternative. Smoked fish (salmon, whitefish, trout), pickled herring or even wild mushrooms all taste good on buttery, cream-dabbed warm blini. What wouldn't?

## BUCKWHEAT BLINI WITH CAVIAR

Time: 15 minutes, plus at least 2 to 3 hours for rising

For the blini:

- 1 package dry active yeast (2 1/2 teaspoons)
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 3 cups slightly warm milk
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup buckwheat flour
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons melted butter

4 eggs, separated

For serving:

- 6 ounces creme fraiche
- 1/4 pound (1 stick) melted butter, kept warm
- At least 125 grams caviar or trout roe (about 5 ounces)
- 2 tablespoons finely cut chives

1. In large mixing bowl, dissolve yeast and sugar in 1 cup milk. Stir in 1/2 cup all-purpose flour and let stand until bubbly, about 10 minutes.

2. Combine remaining all-

purpose flour, the buckwheat flour and salt. Add 2 cups milk to the yeast mixture and gradually whisk in flour-salt mixture until you have a smooth, thick batter. Whisk in melted butter. Cover bowl with plastic wrap.

Leave at room temperature and let batter slowly double in size, about 2 to 3 hours. (The batter may remain at room temperature even longer if necessary.) You may also mix batter and refrigerate overnight. Bring to room temperature before proceeding with recipe.

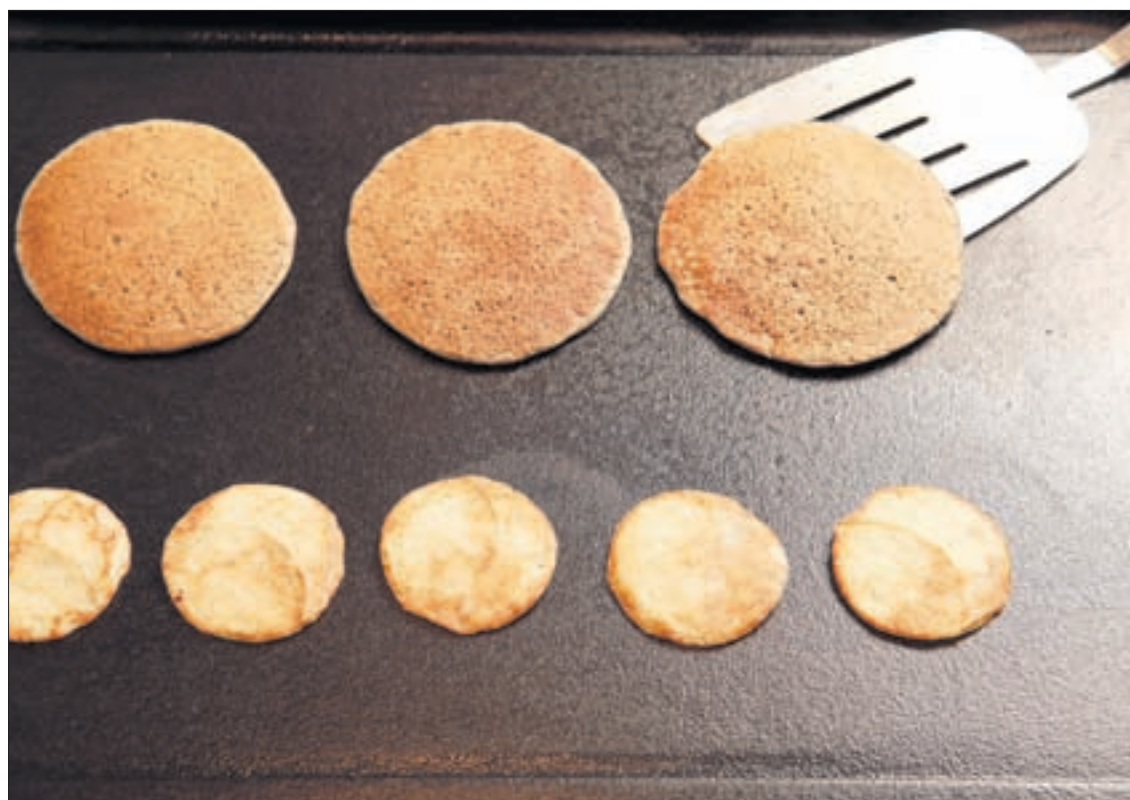
3. When you are ready to cook blini, stir down batter, which will have become quite frothy. Beat egg yolks and whisk into batter.

In a separate bowl, beat egg whites until stiff. Gently fold egg whites into batter.

4. Spoon batter onto a hot, lightly greased griddle, using a large soup spoon to make blini that are 3 inches in diameter. Cook for about 2 minutes, until bottom is well browned.

Flip and cook 1 minute more. (Wait until surface is covered in bubbles before flipping.) Keep warm in a low oven. Serve with a dollop of creme fraiche, a drizzle of butter, a generous spoonful of caviar and a sprinkling of chives.

Yield: About 60 3-inch blini, 10 to 12 servings. □



**Blinis are prepared for a dish that goes perfect with welcoming the New Year!**

(Fred R. Conrad/The New York Times)

ways referred to as blini, because how could you have only one?

In my opinion, the best blini are made with buckwheat flour, although there are white flour versions too. Buckwheat blini have a wonderful nutty flavor that marries well with the butter, sour cream and salty toppings that usually accompany them. There are modern recipes that use baking

ports to the United States of the most endangered species, like beluga, are currently prohibited. And although some feel that wild caviar is the only way to go, it is clear that sustainably farmed sturgeon (and caviar) is the best choice. Aquacultured sturgeon and caviar production is now prevalent in California and Florida, as well as in France, Spain, Italy and

is still considered a luxury item, and a 1-ounce jar will set you back at least \$70. Buying a larger tin lowers the per-ounce price, but it is an extravagance no matter what. (Evidently, though, not in Russia. A friend who lived there for a year told me he had caviar for breakfast, lunch and dinner.) If you're planning a blini-and-caviar cocktail party on the cheap,